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FIRST-CLASS MEN

A NOVEL OF GERMAN ARMY LIFE

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BY

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(WOLF GRAF VON BAUDISSIN)

CONFISCATED IN GERMANY



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PREFACE

Count Baudissin's book, now placed before the English-speaking public, is the sensation of Germany. It has created heated debates in the *Reichstag*. It has been suppressed by the police, and its author is being criminally prosecuted—for what? For telling the plain truth about the German army, its officers, the medieval and feudal ideas still prevailing among them, the remarkable code of honor and morals which govern these "First-Class Men."

Startling as Count Baudissin's revelations are, they appear to be based on facts, and supported by impartial witnesses. The New York *Evening Post*, certainly not a paper seeking cheap sensations, in an article on this subject, says, in part:

"Something new in the way of literature is now on the top wave of popularity in Europe and has begun an invasion of the United States—the German military romance. Writers of great renown—Count de Baudissin, for instance—tell of the proudest army of Europe stories that read like a new chapter of the history of Emperor Nero. Are these stories really true?

"Militarism develops and fosters the instinct of brutality, and in the lands where it thrives we find it insolent, haughty, and contemptuous of the rights

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of the weak. And such a land is Germany. Let us look at the effect of militarism, dominant and rampant, upon the character of her officers.

“First of all, it must be understood that there are different classes of German officers. The officers themselves have distinctive characters; not in their grades, no! but in their noble birth and the classification of their regiments. First in rank is the nobility, then the wealthy civilian, then the poor civilian. After this classification comes the regulation concerning the rank and precedence of the regiments—cavalry, foot, artillery, train. As though this were not enough, the highest class of all these regiments is the Imperial Guard. All this is hard to understand in a republican government.

“Such is the foolish worship of caste in Germany that when a family of what may be called the citizen class becomes able to boast that one of its members is an officer in the army, it is thereby exalted above all others. And this endeavor after distinction is the prolific breeder of jealousies and heart burnings, and has all but beggared thousands of worthy families which might otherwise have lived in peace and contentment.

“A young man of, say, eighteen years, becomes a lieutenant. From this time on he is an officer of the army—a commander over his illiterate brother. Now he possesses might; now he has a great responsibility. His military education shows him the world in two classes only—one that commands and one that obeys. He sees that thousands of people look upon him in

awe, and his character absorbs the influence of such adulation. He sees that his rank gives him the opportunity to do a great deal more than the common people, and that his uniform covers him with a halo. He makes his own laws; and where a citizen would be punished by imprisonment for certain misdeeds he might commit, the honor of the army will protect the officer from such a fate if it is possible to do so. If impossible, then he has two courses open to him, either blow out his brains or cross the great body of water separating this country from the Fatherland.

“What crimes can bring an officer into such trouble? In the regiment it is the first rule for every officer to be as lavish and ostentatious in his expenditure of money as possible, even if at home the members of the officer’s family are denying themselves comforts and even necessities in order that he may maintain his position in the atmosphere of luxury and false pride made necessary when he donned the uniform of his Emperor. True, the State forbids the officer to make debts, but it is impossible for the State to enforce this rule.

“Life in the German army to-day is one of luxury. The simpleness and frugality of the Prussian officer of the time of Frederick the Great is a thing of the past.

“I am certain that eighty per cent. of the German officers have not sufficient money to live in the way that their positions demand. The Emperor believes he has a divine right to rule; so do the officers in the army. The Emperor says of his army, ‘It is first in

Germany'; so do the officers in the army. The Emperor gives honor to the citizen; ah, but that's where the officers in the army draw the line! Honor the citizen? In their arrogant self-consequence the officers in the army have framed this rule: 'If a citizen offends you, take your sword and kill him on the spot!'

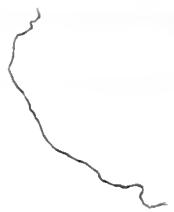
"All that has been said about the officers in general holds good to a greater degree with the officers of the Guard; for the arrogance and insolence of the former class is, to some extent, but the reflection of the arrogance and insolence in the latter. It is the ability to write the little word 'von' before his name that gives the possessor the right to become an officer of the Guard. It is this little word that entitles him to be considered an aristocrat and enables him to act like an autocrat. It is this little word that acts as a Chinese wall between him and his brother officer.

"All Guard regiments are stationed in or near Berlin. The Prussian who enters a Guard regiment as a common soldier is subject to influences from capital life that are essentially degrading. His commanders being officers with the little word 'von' before their names, regard him with no more consideration than if he were a beast. In one hour he will hear from the mouths of his superiors more curses than he would hear in a lifetime in his own country. Far away from his friends and relatives, and forced daily to submit to treatment such as no self-respecting man would stand for one moment,

his character steadily deteriorates, and from long being regarded as a beast he at last comes to act like a beast.

“The chasm that separates the common soldier from the officer is so great that it could not possibly be greater between human beings. It is these officers who are to-day the heroes of the military romances that have created such a sensation in Europe. Their rule is that of the feudal sword-law aristocracy of the Middle Ages, with all its shocking brutality.

“If an officer of the Imperial Guard looks with contempt upon a brother officer of the line because his family is of the citizen class, what sort of treatment from such hands can the common soldier expect? The poor fellow’s sole duty is: ‘Obey like the miserable cur that you are!’ And it is because of this treatment that German authors have brought it to the attention of the world. Are they true? *Horribile dictum!* They are true.”—*The Publisher.*



FIRST-CLASS MEN

I.

The “Yellow Butterflies”—the foot regiment Franz Ferdinand Leopold of the Guard bears that nickname on account of their yellow shoulder-straps—celebrated the anniversary of the event when on this day, more than thirty years before, they lost in the battle of Gravelotte one-third of their men and considerably over one-half of their officers. The memory of the regiment’s heroic deeds must never die; it must be kept alive among the younger generation. Hence the celebration of the battle’s anniversary under the motto: “In memory of the dead, for the emulation of the living.” For that which they had done the dead received each year a wonderful wreath with a giant bow in the regimental colors; the living, who had done nothing, received a costly dinner with plenty of champagne. And when enthusiasm ran high under the combined stimulant of the colonel’s official speech and the effect of the wine, they always vowed anew that they would know how to die like their comrades if ever they should be called again to fierce battles. Those vows were a very serious matter with them.

To-day the celebration was particularly dignified and brilliant because of the house-warming of the new regimental home devoted exclusively to the officers' casino. Only this very noon, when the colonel was preparing his speech, it had occurred to him that the house-warming, which was really a joyous event, was hardly in accord with the anniversary in honor of the dead. He could not well say: "In honor of the dead, we open to-day our new casino, of which I hope that it will pay well financially." That wouldn't do. Then the colonel hit upon an appropriate connection. He would simply say: "We promise to the dead to foster in these new rooms first of all that spirit of comradeship and knightly principles which animated them and spurred them on to heroic deeds." That would make the proper impression. So prepared, he went in high spirits to the regimental home. Life and bustle filled the house which had been formally handed over in the morning. Nearly all the former comrades of the regiment had put in appearance, delegations from other military bodies were present, and nobody came empty-handed. A veritable rain of silver articles had been showered upon the Yellow Butterflies. In the reception rooms a large crowd surged back and forth, exchanging friendly greetings and admiring the presents while awaiting the appearance of the high dignitaries.

They were to sit down to the feast at seven o'clock. Promptly upon the stroke of the hour entered the representative of His Majesty. Originally, the King

had promised the regiment the honor of a personal visit, but was prevented at the last moment from coming.

The music began to play, and the long procession moved into the dining-room. A cry of surprise rose to every lip upon entering the marvellous room as the eyes fell upon the beautifully adorned table.

The Yellow Butterflies, each with a guest, seemed to grow and expand, as if to say: "Oh, yes; that's us, that's our home. Long enough did we endure a place not at all suitable to our station. But now? Where is the regiment that can boast of such a home?"

They knew that their old casino had been a good deal of a social drawback. An officer of the Horse Guards had even vouchsafed the opinion that no decent man could feel at home there. They had long been the last, now they were the first. The Yellow Butterflies beamed, and every word of recognition, admiration, or quiet envy uttered by any of the guests sounded in their ears like heavenly music. Every one of them felt as if through him the regiment had at last come to own this magnificent home. Each had contributed his own share, in a way. If every one had not cherished and maintained the traditional spirit and reputation of the corps of officers, as of old, the "Alten Herren" and friends of the regiment would never have raised the large sum of money expended in the building and furnishing. Each of the officers had always been conscious of his position and his moral obligations as bearer of an old

and noble name. They gloried in being one of the proudest and most exclusive regiments in the whole army.

The Yellow Butterflies gazed with pride upon their guests—distinguished names all.

A lieutenant of the Uhlans, the Baron Gersbach, who was universally known as a great gambler, put his monocle in position and scrutinized the assembly seated around the table. Then he turned to his neighbor: "Really a company of quality, not a single 'Buergerlicher' at the whole table."

"Oh, yes—one."

The Uhlan pressed the monocle deeper into his eye to find the man.

"Who is it?" he asked at last.

"The architect who built the house for us."

"Oh, well, he—anyway, he doesn't count. But how did you come to invite him?"

"We considered the matter long, but we couldn't very well do otherwise. The fellow has served with us formerly as a one-year volunteer, and out of attachment and love for the regiment he drew the plans for us free of charge and rendered all his services without pay. We had to give him some kind of recognition."

The Uhlan nodded assent: "I understand. Such an invitation is not only the simplest, but the most brilliant way of thanking him. Until the end of his days the man will cherish the memory of this evening. Besides, to have eaten with us will be a brilliant recommendation for him. For his station

he looks remarkably decent. His hands are even manicured. What's his name?"

"I believe Wipper, Lipper, Ripper, or something like that."

"Oh, well, that's all the same. By the way," the Uhlans inquired, "have you heard of the funny affair that happened, according to rumor, at Dingsda, during the love feast of a regiment of the line? One of those churls—pardon me, but in a case like that I don't like to use the word comrade—one of those churls got drunk, and in his beastly condition—you can't call it otherwise—he boxed an ensign's ear in the casino because the young man didn't jump quick enough when the besotted beast drank to him."

"Incredible!"

"And yet true."

"What was the upshot?"

Baron Gersbach shrugged his shoulders: "What can there be? They can't shoot each other, for it will never do for an ensign to challenge his superior to fight a duel."

"No, that'll never do," assented the other.

"There remain two ways; either the lieutenant, if he ever gets sober again, apologizes to the ensign in the presence of all the assembled officers and of all those who witnessed the insult. That would settle the matter. Or else the lieutenant is kicked out, in which case the ensign must decide whether he can continue to live with the blow upon his cheek. It would, of course, be all over with his career. In our

regiment, at least, no ensign who had to pocket a box on the ear could ever become an officer."

They were silent for a moment, because the orderly was just passing, refilling the glasses. Both men drank to each other. Then the Uhlan continued: "One might be sorry for the poor ensign; he is said to have behaved blamelessly during the whole affair. It is far meaner to assault an ensign than a comrade. Really, the worst of the matter lies deeper. Why are people not more cautious in the admission of young aspirants to the position of officers? To-day a fellow may become a lieutenant if he has the necessary allowance and belongs to a family whose members have not been in dishonorable conflict with the police."

The other assented: "Alas, alas, it's bad enough that the increase of the army makes it necessary to admit 'Buergerlicher' to officer's rank."

The Uhlan emptied his glass, and said: "You are right, though it cannot be denied that there are some nice 'Buergerlicher.' I must confess. I have known a few—in our own regiment; they would be unthinkable, of course—but one may meet them accidentally on the train."

The Yellow Butterfly looked up in astonishment: "Do you travel in a second-class carriage, then?"

"Who, I? First the Uhlan looked astonished, then he laughed aloud: "I second-class? A real fine joke! Will you permit to repeat it elsewhere? I, second-class! If I write that to papa it will amuse him royally."

It took the Uhlan a long time to compose himself before he continued: "If I mentioned a while ago meeting on the train, I meant it, of course, as a figure of speech. I thought of a fleeting passing acquaintance. Then, as I said, such people are sometimes very nice, and I enjoy genuine pleasure in conversation with a provincial comrade coming from altogether different surroundings. I am highly amused when they tell me how they get along with the monthly extra allowance of fifty or sixty marks. Fifty or sixty marks! I pay that to my hair-dresser." And quite suddenly, without apparent connection, he asked: "Pray, tell me, because we argued the point yesterday at the casino, how long ago did you get rid of the last 'Buergerlicher' from this regiment?"

"May 15th it will be four years." The Uhlan looked up, somewhat astonished. "You know even the date?"

"Oh, one does not forget such a joyful day."

"You are right there. And among your ensigns you have no 'Buergerlicher' either?"

"Not a single one. The colonel has declared categorically that he would under no circumstances accept a 'Buergerlicher'."

"Very sensible of the man. In the first place, such a one wouldn't fit in here at all. He would embarrass you all around and feel very uncomfortable himself. The only proper thing is to stay among your own class. Let people talk of caste, spirit and pride of nobility who know absolutely

nothing about it. Let them talk to their hearts' content, what do you care?"

"What do we care?" And after a little pause the Yellow Butterfly continued: "You know, of late I have been thinking about caste spirit and pride of nobility. If, at a love feast in the Guard regiments, we empty our glasses to the toast that the spirit of the officers' corps may remain unchanged, I think it means not only that we should cherish love and fidelity for our ruling house, but also that we, with our views, should always remain the first-class men we are. We, the bearers of names of ancient nobility, the members of the most distinguished regiments of the Guard, should always be conscious of our exclusive station, stand together shoulder to shoulder, and stoutly maintain the division wall separating us from the 'Buergerlichen.' Let us drink to the sentiment that we, the Guard regiments, remain what we are, the bearers of the most distinguished names, first-class men!"

To the Uhlan the talk of his table companion seemed much too tedious. He had scarcely listened to what the other said. Yet he now assented: "Let us drink." Just as he was about to raise his glass a stir swept through the gathering. The colonel had risen to call for the first "Hoch" for the supreme war lord. This first address was followed by a second one from the attending representative of His Majesty, the King.

The latter rose after a brief pause to give thanks for the homage just rendered, and then went on:

“ His Majesty has commissioned me to express to you his lively regret not to be able to attend personally on this the regiment's day of honor. His Majesty has deigned to command me to convey his royal greetings to the regiment which has ever distinguished itself in war and peace, and to assure the regiment of his royal grace and good-will. His Majesty feels assured of being able to count upon the regiment in the future, as in the past, and knows every one of you will be ready at any time joyfully to give his life for the Fatherland and for the ruling house. That is warranted by the spirit which has ever distinguished the regiment, the spirit which is to be particularly fostered in these rooms, devoted first of all to regimental comradeship.”

The grand gentleman paused for an instant. An assenting murmur swept through the ranks of the officers and guests who had risen to listen to the address.

“ Now follows the ‘Hoch’ to the regiment,” they thought, while looking whether their glasses were filled. For to your own regiment, to your own self, belongs a full glass.

But the expected finish of the address did not follow immediately. The grand gentleman was visibly embarrassed. It was obvious to everybody that he wanted to say something more, but could not find the right form. At last he composed himself and went on: “ Gentlemen, His Majesty has deigned to commission me to inform the regiment that His Majesty has this day transferred to the regiment Lieutenant

Winkler, son of the privy commercial Councillor Winkler, heretofore serving as lieutenant in the foot regiment 250. And now, gentlemen," continued the prince, visibly relieved, and raising his voice, "raise your glasses with me to the welfare of this fine regiment, whose corps of officers comprises the best names of the nation, whose non-commissioned officers and men are shining models of faithful performance of duty—the regiment, Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

They felt as if their throats were suddenly choked by an iron grip. Never had a "Hoch" to the regiment sounded so dismally, and it was fortunate that the flare of the trumpets filled the banquet hall.

The "Hoch" given, His Highness sat down. But the others still remained standing. They stared at each other as if they had not heard aright, as if each tried to read in the face of his neighbor whether that which they had just heard was really the truth.

"We have become 'buergerlich'!"

Nobody knew who spoke the word first, but all at once it passed from mouth to mouth: "We have become 'buergerlich'."

They felt as if a jet of ice-cold water had struck their faces. When at last they again seated themselves at the table and the orchestra struck up a merry medley, when the champagne bubbled in the glasses they could not comprehend the incredible, could not conceive it; they again had a 'Buergerlicher' in the regiment.

The high spirits of the diners had vanished, and the Yellow Butterflies felt as if suddenly a different

sentiment penetrated their rooms. The glamor of the festival was dulled. It seemed to all of them as if the silver shone with less brightness, as if the crystal had less polish, the hall less refinement.

There was a painful hush around the table. The Yellow Butterflies dared not turn to their guests. They knew there would be a storm of questions about this Winkler, who and what he was, where he came from, and why it was that His Majesty took him from his frontier garrison and transferred him to this proud and distinguished regiment. There must be something back of it. They dared not look up. They knew it was written in the faces of their guests: "You no longer are what you were. You can't help it, of course, to have become 'buergerlich', but there is the bare fact, with grave consequences for your station in the future?"

If they had only been apprised privately that they would have a "Buergerlicher" lieutenant—but, no, publicly, before the assembled company, they were told of it. There was no denial possible and no excuse. It was a straight blow in the face, for the "Alten Herren," too, who had partly come from afar to attend the house-warming, and a new element entered the house with them—a "Buergerlicher"! What has the regiment done to deserve the extinction of the nimbus which had always distinguished its body of officers? Formerly, when a "Buergerlicher" lieutenant had been among them for a time, they suffered and chafed under it and considered it a special royal grace that the King, at the personal

request of the body of officers, retransferred the man to the line. When they were once more among themselves, each swore to himself to live only for the honor of the regiment, henceforward more than ever, so that no "Buergerlicher" might again be set among them. Now it had been done just the same.

The Uhlans had long been looking at his neighbor who was sitting in a brown study. He felt like saying a sympathetic word. All his feelings he condensed into the remark: "It's too bad, it was so nice among you."

The Yellow Butterfly winced. These words could have only one meaning: "The start is made. The one 'Buergerlicher' will be followed by others, and even if he should remain the only one, it is no longer with you as it was before."

The Uhlans were considered an immensely feudal regiment, and the Yellow Butterflies had made the greatest efforts to enter into a friendly and comrade-like relation with them. At last they had succeeded. The Uhlans attended to-day almost to a man. They had presented a costly silver table ornament to the "Closely allied regiment." Now when the friendship had barely commenced, it threatened to go to pieces again.

All breathed a sigh of relief when at last the company rose from the table. The Yellow Butterflies felt a burning desire to make a clean breast of it among themselves and to learn particulars about their new comrade. Surely, somebody must know something about him. He must evidently have some kind

of a name as far as such a thing is possible for a "Buergerlicher," or else His Majesty would not have done so much for him.

Distinct and separate groups formed—the guests, the "Alten Herren" and the regimental officers—each group eagerly discussing the portentous event.

The Yellow Butterflies crowded around the aide-de-camp, Count Wetthorn; he was very pale and was nervously stepping from one foot to the other, only the tips of his faultlessly polished shoes tapping the floor. Next to the commander the matter touched him nearest. Was he not on many occasions the representative of the regiment and of its body of officers? And was he now and hereafter to represent Winkler, too, he, a count? He was a proud, distinguished personality. On his breast shone an order of the fourth class, his latest acquisition, earned as dance leader at court. For two years he had filled that position. It had been a distinction not only for him, but for the regiment, too. When he returned to active service he was made aide-de-camp and everybody felt that he deserved the position as the worthiest among them.

"But, Count, speak up, you must know something. Who is this Winkler?"

Every eye was turned upon the Count in suspense. Deathly stillness reigned, one hardly dared to breath.

"Gentlemen," the aide-de-camp finally said, "what the colonel and I know we have just learned from His Royal Highness. Winkler's father is a factory owner."

They felt as if a weight had dropped off their breasts. A factory owner! That wasn't so much after all, and not to be compared with the social standing of the owner of a large estate or a court chamberlain. Still, Krupp was originally only a factory owner, and yet the German Emperor called him his friend in public, before all the world. But at once they noticed that some thing was still weighing heavily upon the Count's mind. There must be something objectionable about the factory owner.

"What does the man manufacture? Guns or machines?"

"Neither—breeches buttons."

If lightning had struck among the Yellow Butterflies they couldn't have started back more aghast.

"For the Lord's sake!"

Then they looked around whether any of the guests or orderlies happened to be near. And again they surrounded the aide-de-camp.

The long Bebitz composed himself first. He was on very good terms with the aide-de-camp, almost his friend, and he could afford to hazard the remark: "Don't indulge in any funny business, Count, we none of us feel like it just now. One doesn't say such things for a joke. So, out with it, what does the old man manufacture?"

The Count looked calmly upon the speaker: "My dear friend, I don't feel the least like joking. It is as I told you, the man actually manufactures buttons, in large quantities, of course. He owns three big factories, and employs thousands of workers for

whom, it is alleged, he cares in a really splendid manner. For many years he has served as a member of the city council, and for three years he has been a privy commercial councillor. Recently he donated to a charitable institution under the protectorate of Her Majesty the Queen one hundred thousand marks, and promised in addition an annual contribution of twenty thousand marks for five years. He was offered a high order, but declined. When he was asked how he could be thanked he replied, he would be glad to have his only son transferred from his frontier garrison to the capital, so that he could see him oftener. It wouldn't do to deny him his wish, and so the son has come to us."

After a little pause of deep silence, the aide-de-camp went on: "Transfer of Lieutenant Winkler to our regiment has been made on the personal order of His Majesty the King. It is not for us to criticize His Majesty's acts, and I beg of you to remember this and to abstain from giving utterance to any opinion."

That was clear and distinct. All could perceive that the aide-de-camp spoke in the name and by the order of the commander, and so one after the other withdrew silently.

But that silence spoke louder than words. The Yellow Butterflies glided about in depression. They had not the courage to ask their guests to stay, though they made ready to leave much earlier than usual. Wasn't it all the same whether they lingered for another hour or not? The good feeling was gone, the feast spoiled for them. The rooms became more

and more deserted, and one guest after another departed, leaving only the Yellow Butterflies behind. When at last they were alone they asked themselves again and again: "Whereby have we deserved this?"

In a corner of the room little Willberg, the favorite and spoiled fellow of them all, sat collapsed in a chair. He was a young lieutenant, twenty-six years of age, whose father before him had served with the Yellow Butterflies and earned the Iron Cross of the first class at Gravelotte. It may be that young Willberg had indulged rather freely in the champagne. He had the howling blues, crying and sobbing like a child.

"Willberg, what's the matter with you?" queried his comrades, as they stepped up to him.

He raised his youthful face, now bathed in tears, and sobbed, with heartrending voice: "Oh, my regiment, my beautiful regiment."

They stood around him in silence. None found a single word of consolation. They were all sorrowful unto death.

II.

“At twelve o’clock at noon I desire to see the officers in the court of the barracks.”

This order of the colonel’s had been communicated to all in the regular way. Now they stood expectant in front of the barracks. To the question, “What has the old man up his sleeve? Has somebody misbehaved?” the answer was given: “Winkler arrived this morning, and is to be presented to us.” This answer was followed by an “Ah!”—an exclamation of the deepest regret and the greatest disappointment. So Winkler was come after all! How many fervent prayers had been addressed to heaven that he might not come. In their heart of hearts they had still nursed the hope that the transfer might be reconsidered. His Majesty, through an aide-de-camp, had made inquiries as to how the corps of officers felt about the newcomer. They had made a clean breast of it, but instead of reconsidering the transfer, the aide-de-camp showed up one day at the regimental home and stated officially in a casual conversation that His Majesty felt very ungracious over that which he had heard regarding the position taken by the officers towards Lieutenant Winkler. His Majesty firmly expressed his expectation that the regiment would receive their new comrade with open arms. These words of the aide-de-camp did not fail to pro-

duce their effect. Of course the officers didn't suddenly change their views, but they took good care not to express their thoughts further in his presence.

And now Winkler had arrived!

"How does he look? What impression does he make? Has anybody talked with him?" Thus the questions followed one another—then the clock struck twelve, and to the minute appeared the commander with his aide-de-camp and with Lieutenant Winkler. The lieutenant-colonel reported that the officers were present, and the colonel at once began: "Gentlemen, I have asked you to come here in order to present to you your new comrade, Lieutenant Winkler."

Lieutenant Winkler advanced a step, raising his hand saluting to his helmet. There he stood in strictly official position. A man of medium size, of supple yet vigorous build, he was of fine physique, and the handsome uniform of the Yellow Butterflies with its rich golden embroidery suited him admirably. His face fresh and youthful—he was only twenty-seven years of age—was adorned with a strong blonde mustache, and his bright eyes betokened energy and self-reliance. Many others would not have been able to conceal a sort of unrest and embarrassment at this moment; but Winkler's face remained perfectly calm and composed. The Butterflies scrutinized their new comrade just as if scrutinizing a horse led out for sale. They looked at his figure, at his legs, whether he would or wouldn't march well in parade, whether his exterior would to some extent answer the requirements of a member of this distinguished regiment.

According to the way in which they were more or less satisfied with the result of their physical investigation, they raised their hands or one finger only for a longer or shorter moment to their caps.

“Lieutenant Winkler,” the colonel began, “you enjoy the great distinction of having been transferred by direct order of His Majesty the King to a regiment which looks back upon a glorious past and whose corps of officers has always been distinguished by purity of character, knightliness of sentiment, and a high sense of honor inside as well as outside of the service. You come to us from a strange garrison, from strange surroundings. You have grown up in circles whose views are not always the same as ours. It will be your first task to become one of us in the full sense of the word. Not the uniform alone makes a member of the regiment, but the spirit which animates us. The way in which a corps of officers live in a financial and material respect is not without influence upon its spirit. You, Lieutenant, have an allowance so large as to be out of all proportion to the small sums at the disposal of most of my officers. You, Lieutenant, grew up in circles where money plays the main rôle; where, as it were, the honor of the individual is measured according to the size of his bank account. But we find our pride in remaining what we are with or, rather, in spite of our limited means. In the course of time you will learn how many of our comrades have to economize to make both ends meet, how they have to deny themselves many things in order to be able to appear worthily

before the world. I have heard with pleasure that in your small garrison you have been living so far in an economical manner, in no wise making a show of your means. Therefore, now, after your transfer to the capital, let me ask you, in all seriousness, yea, let me admonish you, to resist the temptations that will cross your way in every form possible. Remain modest in your mode of living, and don't give way to the error so easily committed by youth, of making a show of your money and of your wealth, and of posing before your comrades with your means. If you take heed of my warning, then I can assure you a relation of comradeship and friendship will soon develop between you and the other gentlemen, to whom till now you are but a stranger." And, turning to the aide-de-camp, he went on: "Count, I ask you to present Lieutenant Winkler to the individual gentlemen."

It was done, strictly according to the rank in the service, commencing with the lieutenant-colonel and finishing with the youngest lieutenant. Only when the names of the lieutenants were reached did Winkler's body show some signs of life. During the colonel's long address, and while his superiors were named to him, he stood immovable, hand on helmet. They all had to admit that he stood well, without the least motion; that he had complete control over the expression of his face. Not a muscle moved, nothing betrayed his sentiments during the colonel's remarks. But when the names of the lieutenants were spoken—the first lieutenants he had greeted as superiors—his

position relaxed somewhat and he responded to the bows of his comrades. His bow was good, they had to admit that. At last he could drop his hand and stand at ease. His arm was nearly benumbed, the muscles of his legs quivered and pained—but no outward sign betrayed it.

“Lieutenant Winkler will be transferred to the second battalion, fifth company.”

All eyes turned to the captain of the fifth, Freiherr von Warnow. He was considered as the most distinguished officer in the regiment, his nobility was of the oldest, he could trace it back to Emperor Barbarossa. Under him a Warnow had distinguished himself in war. He was married to a Countess Marburg, was very rich, and his house was considered as one of the most aristocratic in the capital. Whenever the regiment required a representative, whenever a delegation was sent anywhere, Freiherr von Warnow always was part of it. By birth and by his connection with the most distinguished families, he was manifestly predestined to such a position. He was as distinguished in his official service as in his private life. He brooked no ill-treatment or abuse of his soldiers by his officers. The comrades would jokingly say he tried to make a gentleman out of every musketeer. His first lieutenant, Baron von Felsen, stood by him in this task admirably. For two weeks past he had only one officer, because his lieutenant had recently broken his arm. Four weeks more might elapse before he could return to active service. Yet it had not occurred to the captain that he would get

another officer. And now they put that Winkler into his company, his, Freiherr von Warnow's!

He couldn't conceal his displeasure. His heavy eyebrows contracted angrily, and he was about to murmur something in rage when Winkler's eyes met his. On hearing the name of his captain, Winkler had looked around inquiringly. Who of the many to whom he had been presented was Freiherr von Warnow? When he saw this disappointed and indignant face he knew at once. He looked at him firmly and steadily, as if to ask: "What have I done to you?" Possibly he grew a little paler, but his voice had a steady sound as he approached his superior and reported to him for service.

Freiherr von Warnow, thanking, laid a finger on his cap, and said: "It would have been more correct if you had first reported to your major."

Winkler's face flushed, then he made up for the omission. Next he approached Freiherr von Masmann, his first lieutenant, as if to present himself to him again as a comrade of the company. The Freiherr took this amiability as something quite self-evident, and only replied by a curt "thank you."

The colonel conversed with the officers of the staff, the other officers talked in groups among themselves. Winkler stood alone, nobody paid any attention to him, and he felt relieved when the colonel finally dismissed them. He turned to go, when his captain, engaged in conversation with his first lieutenant, called to him: "Pray one moment, Lieutenant," then after a brief pause continued: "I don't know, Lieu-

tenant, whether you are aware of the fact, and I want to emphasize it right now, that a distinguished and decent tone pervades my company. I must ask you to omit all cursing and scolding; my men are used to be treated as decent people. That you came to my company is a distinction of which I hope you will prove yourself worthy." Turning to his first lieutenant, he went on: "And you, my dear baron, in case Lieutenant Winkler should not find it easy to strike the right tone at the beginning, will have the goodness to help him." The first lieutenant raised his hand to his cap, and the captain again turned to Winkler: "Tomorrow morning we shall meet in service. Pray give your address to the sergeant, so that he may know where orders reach you."

"Very well, Captain."

"For the present I have nothing more for you—thank you, gentlemen."

The two lieutenants turned to go and walked in silence together across the great barracks court. Only after they had passed the gate the baron said: "We have dinner at six o'clock, won't you come now for breakfast to the regimental home?"

But Winkler declined: "I have to report yet to my higher superiors and have much to attend to otherwise."

The other did not insist any further, and so they parted.

Winkler called a cab. It was nearly three o'clock when he reached the hotel where he had put up for the time.

"Is there any mail for me?" he inquired. For three days he had been without news from home. He had wired to his parents that he would arrive at the capital to-day, and he hoped now to find word from them.

The porter had looked over the mail. "There is nothing for you, lieutenant."

Winkler could hardly conceal his disappointment. On this day, when he felt so lonely and disappointed, a greeting from his parents would have seemed particularly cheering. He was prepared for a reception not altogether cordial; but that he would be received so coldly and with so much repugnance was a disagreeable surprise to him. It was more than he had expected.

He mounted the stairs. To his surprise the door to his room was not locked. As he opened it and entered he was received by loud and cheerful laughter: "Ha, ha, George, my boy, I call that a surprise, eh! I told the porter I'd wring his neck if he betrayed my arrival to you. For two hours I have been sitting here waiting for you. Well, thank the Lord, here you are at last. How fine you look, my boy. Mother would be beside herself with pride if she could see you. Now the first thing you must get yourself photographed." The commercial councillor embraced his son with heartiness and fatherly pride. At last George extricated himself. "Father, this is truly a surprise, how did you come here?"

The old gentleman, a man of about sixty, medium-sized, vigorous and well-knit, with a large red face,

great grey eyes, and heavy bushy brows, whose whole aspect betokened iron will power, energy and great self-reliance, looked at his son with a contented smile. "Do you know your father so little that you think I'd leave you alone here to-day? I have got to assist you in looking up rooms, but, first of all, I want to know how you get along and to hear how the people received you. Now, tell me."

George had discarded helmet and sash and had changed his uniform coat for a comfortable house jacket. Then he took one of the cigars offered him by his father and seated himself in a chair.

"My boy, do tell me. One can talk while one is dressing. I know you say one thing at a time, but I have always insisted one can do several things at one and the same time. Do you believe that otherwise I would have accomplished what I have? I have taken my dinner standing, eating with the left hand, while taking notes with my right, and between whiles giving orders and directions to all sorts of people. Now, then fire away, talk." The commercial councillor looked expectantly upon his son, who remained silent. At last the young man spoke:

"Father, it turned out as I wrote you when you notified me that you had asked for my transfer to the capital. It has all come to pass as I told you, and even a great deal worse."

The old man straightened himself up and looked with astonished eyes at his son. "That means, then——"

"That means," the son continued, "they have re-

ceived me here at the regiment in a manner that not only might have sent the blush of shame to my face, but might have aroused me to anger and revolt. I felt all that within me. But I controlled myself, showing no outward sign, as I always do. They made long speeches to me, they admonished me to do my duty, and they rubbed it in again and again that it was a great distinction to belong to the regiment."

"Yes, that's it," confirmed the father. "You ought to have seen the eyes when I told my friends and acquaintances I had brought about your transfer to the Yellow Butterflies. People wouldn't believe it until I showed it to them in black and white. Yes, yes, my boy, it was by no means easy for me, and the pleasure isn't cheap, either. Two hundred thousand marks are no trifle. Well, I don't grudge the money."

"But I do, father, for I not only believe, but I know, that it is a poor investment. When you wrote to me at the time that you had applied for my transfer I begged of you immediately to do everything in your power to cancel your request. You only laughed at my scruples, and you wrote to me: 'The Yellow Butterflies will appreciate what they have got in the son of Privy Commercial Councillor Winkler, and if they don't know they'll find out by and by.'"

"And they will, my son, they will." But George shook his head: "They will not, father; they will not even take the trouble to know more about me; they look upon me as an intruder, a stranger. Already I know they wait for the hour when they can get rid of me with decency. They will watch me, and

everything I do, they will weigh every word I say, until at last they find some reason to tell me; 'Dear friend, you don't fit into a regiment so distinguished as we are.' And one fine morning I'll find myself again in a little garrison."

The old man exploded. "Oh, oh! we are not there yet. Before things get so far I shall have something to say about it. I am in great favor with my king, and at the proper hour I shall know how to open my mouth to him about it."

George shrugged his shoulders: "Then it will be too late. It won't do any good. After all, you wouldn't want the corps of officers to keep me against their will. I am suffering enough from the fact that I came here altogether against their will. Do you think I didn't feel it bitterly when not one of them had a word of welcome for me, not one of them grasped my hand in friendly greeting?"

The veins on the father's forehead showed his anger. "Those stuck-up fellows, what do they think? What is it they are stuck up for? Because of the fact when they were born they accidentally got into a cradle which stood in a nobleman's house? Is it their merit that they have got a count or a baron for a father? It makes me laugh! If that's all they are stuck up for, then I am sorry for that crowd of Junkers. To be born as the son of a nobleman is no merit at all. It's a different thing to be like me, the son of a petty official, and to work your way up by your own industry and your own force, and to occupy a position in the world such as I have achieved.

If anyone can't see that, then he simply won't see it, or is unable to do so because of extraordinary stupidity."

The commercial councillor had risen and walked up and down the floor in excitement. George knew his father. When he was in a mood like the present one he had to work it out and cool down by degrees before he was accessible to any outside argument. So he let the old gentleman go on without interfering until Winkler at last, with a vigorous curse, sat down again in the chair.

"Now," said the old man, "I feel better. After all, my boy, I believe you see a little too black. That the people consider you an interloper one may understand, and one can understand likewise why they don't want to come to you right off with hands outstretched. Those people don't know you. They know no more about you than that you are the son of your father, and since I did not come into the world with a crown upon my head they are not satisfied so far, but want to know you first and to size you up. When I think the matter over calmly, and I am calm now, I have to own that I like the way in which you were received. After all, lieutenants are not little girls, swearing friendship for life and death after an acquaintnace of five minutes. Why should the Yellow Butterflies be in transports of delight when they see you? Because you are a very fine-looking fellow? No, my son, just wait, it will depend on you to establish your position in the regiment, and I am thoroughly satisfied you will do it."

"At least I will try, father; it shall not be my fault if I fail."

"Why should you fail? Don't begin all over again. Hold your head high and look with courage into the future. What one tries to accomplish seriously one achieves in the end. That's all."

George assented. "Yes. Let us leave the subject. Only the future can and will decide which of us two is right. One thing I would like to know, because I could get no answer to it in my letters. Is it not true that the idea of having me transferred from the line to the guard originated with mother?"

The commercial councillor laughed with pleasure: "Well, since you must know, you are right, my son. You know your mother, she's a jewel, but she wouldn't be a woman if the money, the title and the position now at my command had not gone to her head. We maintain a grand establishment, partly for the sake of your sister Elsa. All the world frequents our house. She didn't like to answer again and again to all inquiries that you were in that miserable place with a regiment of no particular consequence. Of course, nobody said anything, but your mother read in the faces of the people: 'That shows there are still some doors money can't open.' Naturally she was aggravated and her vanity was wounded. She has only one son, and for him the best is just good enough. So she kept on teasing me and teasing me, until at last I did what she wanted."

"That's exactly the way I explained the thing to myself," said George. "I see mother right before me,

how she was talking to you, and I fancy I know every word she was speaking. She certainly meant well, and she must feel very happy now."

The commercial councillor laughed aloud: "Happy, my boy, I tell you there are no words to describe her happy condition."

George laughed, and they spoke of mother and of his sister Elsa, to whom he was attached by a boundless love. They spoke of the parental home and of the factory, until the stroke of the clock reminded George it was high time for him to go to dinner.

The commercial councillor looked vexed. "Don't we dine together? I had thought we were going to have a dinner in some fine restaurant to celebrate this day in a way that might provoke the envy of the immortal gods."

"To-day it is impossible, father; to-day, the very first day, I must under no consideration be missed at the regimental home. Possibly to-morrow I can disengage myself." The old man murmured in vexation:

"To-morrow is not to-day. Well, perhaps there is no other way out of it." And after a little he said: "Can't I eat with you in the regimental home? I would like to make the acquaintance of your comrades in the regiment. In fact, I thought of paying my visit to your direct superior, or, at least, to your commander."

George was embarrassed. He was a very good son, he was proud of his father, and loved him above everything, and precisely for that reason he wanted

to avoid the possibility of a slight to him at table. Under no circumstances did he wish to give a chance to his comrades to exchange remarks among themselves about his father because some trifling thing did not please them. He was also afraid of his father's passionate explosive temperament, which he knew only too well. He was afraid the old man might forget himself and might drop, in the heat of argument, some critical remarks which in the end could only hurt both of them. So he said, evasively: 'No, that won't do very well to-day, father; it's an old custom in the army that the officer who eats for the first time with his new comrades is invited by them. As a guest, I can't well bring another guest with me.'

The old gentleman saw that point quicker even than George expected: "Well, then, I'll drink a good bottle of Rhine wine by myself. We'll see each other again before going to bed, and you can tell me how it came off."

When George came home at ten o'clock he didn't have much to tell, at least not much that was pleasant. It had been nice in a way, they had drunk his health, but that was all. The rooms at the casino were gorgeous, and he dwelt on the description of the house until his father at last bade him good-night.

George went to his room, but he lay awake long, thinking of the things he had not told his father. The senior at the table had welcomed him with a few words, but they sounded so cold George said to himself, "The man only speaks because he has to."

His heart knows nothing of what his lips utter." A "Hoch" followed the address, they had touched glasses with him, and so the matter was considered disposed of.

"Oh, that I had been permitted to stay where I was. How will it come out in the end?" That question kept him awake for a long time. But when at last he fell asleep he saw in his dream the happy eyes of his mother beaming in exultation over the distinction achieved by her son.

III.

It was five weeks since the regiment returned from the manœuvres. The recruits had been received, and the busy winter service begun. If anybody ever longed impatiently for the arrival of winter, it was George. Although he had now belonged for half a year to the Yellow Butterflies, he was as much of a stranger to his comrades as on the first day. All attempts to gain a foothold had failed through the passive resistance of the others. He hoped that the festivities of the winter would bring him in closer touch and relation with his regimental comrades.

To-day there was a dance at the house of Captain von Warnow, who owned an elegant residence with large rooms. The whole regiment was invited, and people looked forward to the affair with eagerness, because entertainments at the Warnows were altogether different from everyday humdrum affairs. As in former winters, the Warnows this season had with them as visitor their niece, Fraulein von Wiedemann, a tall, supple, very good-looking brunette of twenty-three. The young baroness was a well-known belle, and if in the course of years she had lost a trifle of her early charms, she was still rated as a beauty. Her manner was as lovely and distinguished as her appearance; she was a thoroughbred aristocrat. The Wiedemanns were of very old nobility, and she was

brought up in the strictest principles of her caste. Her father had been an officer in a regiment of the Guard, for whom a brilliant military future was prophesied. But one day he stumbled during an inspection of the battalion and he retired from service. During his active term he had spent his private fortune, which never had been large; now he was reduced to his pension of about four thousand marks, on which he lived with his wife and daughter in a small town. His son served as officer in a distinguished artillery regiment. In the house of the retired major bitter poverty reigned. His son, in order to live according to his station, required an allowance which took nearly half the pension, and the other half, in spite of all efforts, would not suffice to meet the necessities of life even approximately. The major was always over ears in debt. At first he did not care much; Hildegarde, his beautiful daughter, would make a brilliant match, and share her wealth with him. But the years went on, and the brilliant match did not materialize. He was sure Hildegarde would never get a proper husband in the miserable little town where they lived; so Frau von Warnow, related to the Wiedemanns, and fond of Hildegarde, took it upon herself to look out for a suitable marriage. In this way Hildegarde had come to the capital for the first time five years before and had made a genuine sensation everywhere. At the court festivities their Majesties were gracious to the beautiful girl. Still, suitors did not materialize.

One admirer after the other retired when he be-

came aware of her financial condition. None of the guard officers—and only such a one was then considered eligible by Frau von Warnow and Hildegarde—was rich enough to marry a girl whose whole dower was her beauty and a family deep in debt. For it was not only the father who contracted obligations on account of his future son-in-law, but also the brother, who was known as a gambler and spendthrift. The father could not understand how his daughter could come back after the first winter unengaged. He had counted so firmly upon a brilliant match for her that he felt it a heavy blow of Fate when his hope did not find fulfillment. From that blow he recuperated only slowly. But finally hope woke again and had remained living up to the present, though the prospects for him and for Hildegarde seemed to dwindle more and more. The brother, too, still thought to be saved in this way. It must happen some day. He was so deep in debt that he had come to depend on occasional winnings at the card table. It couldn't go on this way forever. The rich relations assisted him from time to time with a thousand mark note, but that did not begin to suffice to pay his debts. Usually he gambled away the money the very first evening. Every time he found himself in a tight place he would write to his sister: "Fulfill the hope we all repose in you; save us, even if you have to lower your expectations to some extent. It's something terrible to think that I might have a 'Buergerlicher' brother-in-law, a fellow who belongs to another society and doesn't wear

a uniform. But in the end I could stomach even that if he only had plenty of money and was ready to help."

Hildegarde scarcely read these letters any more; she knew their contents in advance. And what the brother wrote, the father said to her day after day, whenever a bill came to the house, or when the mother asked for money for current expenses, or when the servants asked for their wages. Then it was: "Cast away your pride of nobility until you have a husband. There are wealthy 'Buergerlicher' enough who would be glad to have a beautiful, distinguished wife who would introduce them in society and maintain a fashionable house. Once you have a husband, you can show the aristocratic side to impress him. The more you show the sacrifice you made when you married him, the more he will love and revere you."

Something in Hildegarde often cried out: "What am I to do? I can do no more for your sakes than to stand up and be admired. I can't offer myself to the men. I am terribly ashamed of myself and hardly know how I can bear it. All that you tell me appears so horrible and miserable. I don't understand how you can talk to me like that; you ought to respect me, your own child, more than that. Money, money, and always money. So that you can get rid of your debts, I must sell myself to the first man who offers enough for my body."

Often a harsh answer rose to her lips, but she controlled herself bravely, and did not utter it. She

knew only too well the terrible cares her father had to battle with, how he lay awake through long nights thinking where and how he could raise money. When he took his leave from the army he had neglected to look around for some occupation, some chance of earning. At that time he considered it beneath him and his dignity to become the representative of a life insurance company or something similar. Now it was too late; he was no longer young enough to espouse any calling. To the end of his life he must drag out the dreary existence of a retired officer without occupation and without means. The mother suffered even more than the father. She was still an elegant woman, who sighed for the capital and the brilliant entertainments where she was so much admired. There was a bitter struggle between her and her husband when he moved to the small town. She had refused to go. She would have been willing to restrict her expenses in every possible way if she could only be permitted to continue breathing the air where she had lived for years.

“Only a year or two, until Hildegarde has made a rich match. Then we will come back here,” her husband said again and again. So she gave in at last. At first she meant to be very economical even in a small town, but imperceptibly she became again the elegant woman who knew no change in her dress or in her mode of living. Between her and her daughter there was scarcely any other subject for conversation but the prospective marriage. There were hours when she overwhelmed her child with violent

reproaches: "Why do other young girls, by no means as pretty and stylish as you, get husbands? Evidently you are either too reserved, or you betray too plainly the desire to get married." Hildegarde suffered from such remarks, and from the whole domestic misery. Still more terrible to her were the trips to her relations. Certainly it was a kind of relief to be in a rich house, and not to hear of eternal financial worries. But the letters of her parents followed her to the capital, begging her to get money for them from the relatives. And the entertainments were spoiled for her, because every evening before retiring her aunt would ask her the question: "To-day again nothing accomplished?"

Although her aunt did not say it outright, and did not let her feel it, Hildegarde could perceive that she did not like the trouble of taking the young girl out year after year, because she realized the uselessness of her efforts, so that she would have liked it best if Hildegarde had not come back at all.

This year Hildegarde did not wish to go. Her pride and her vanity revolted against the idea of becoming a burden to her relatives, and of playing a rôle both ridiculous and pitiable. Often enough she had noticed the mocking and the compassionate glances of people who greeted her upon the visits paid after her arrival. Some amused themselves in the quiet at the idea that she would not give up the task of catching a man, others, knowing her domestic affairs, felt pity for her.

"I won't go. I won't go under any circum-

stances," she declared to her parents; "I am too proud and too much ashamed to be on exhibition again this year at all the entertainments, and at the end find neither lover nor buyer."

Day after day the struggle went on. One day there was an execution in the house for five hundred marks, the amount of a wine bill, and her father went down on his knees before her, imploring her to save him. At last she gave up her resistance. But she seemed to herself so wretched, so miserable, so low—she was so faint-hearted and desperate, that she cried during the whole long trip on the train.

"Child, you never looked so homely before," was her aunt's greeting. She only relented when Hildegarde pleaded a bad headache. Then the aunt breathed a sigh of relief. But the next morning and the following days the girl's looks were not satisfactory to her relative. There was no question but that she was no longer the stunning beauty she had been. The aunt looked at her with compassionate eyes, and more to herself than to her niece she said: "It is time, high time."

"It is," Hildegarde assented. "I can endure this life no longer. If I don't find a suitor this season—and I know full well I won't—then I shall look up a position as governess, or companion, or something like that. This much I do know—I won't go back to the house of my parents."

"Hildegarde!" Frau von Warnow looked aghast at her niece, who stood there, pale, with deep blue rings under the eyes, with a sad and despondent ex-

pression around the mouth. "Hildegarde, please consider what you are saying. You accept a position, you, a born Baroness Wiedemann; that will never do. You must show some regard for us."

Hildegarde did not reply, but her eyes showed such determination that Frau von Warnow felt real concern, and made a clean breast of it to her husband.

"That's the upshot of it," she said. "This year Hildegarde will positively have been with us for the last time. She is capable of carrying out her resolution, and if she does, it reflects on us. We shall be reproached for not having supported her sufficiently with money, and people will say: 'How can a rich family like the Warnows suffer a near relative to accept a position like that for pay?' We shall be called cold and loveless. The gossip will be, 'If Hildegarde couldn't stay at home any longer, the only proper thing would have been to take her into our house.'"

The captain's face expressed indignation, his underlip quivered and protruded, he stroked his mustache still further upward: "Dear Clara, pray spare me such things. Settle that between you and Hildegarde. I have to think of more important matters. Within the next few days the major is going to attend the hour of instruction, and you know very well that may come off all right, or again it may go all wrong."

"Very true," assented his wife, and he didn't hear the irony in her words.

"Well, I am glad you can see it is of infinitely greater interest to me at present that my fellows should make out well than is the question whether

Hildegarde accepts a position or not. Moreover, you know best."

His wife understood. He had long grown tired of taking Hildegarde under his wing. Certainly he liked her very much, but her family irritated his nerves. Those eternal begging letters he found "simply disgusting," and yet he gave, partly to please Hildegarde, but partly also from a feeling of caste. He could not endure that the "Buergerlicher" merchant should have an execution in the house of his cousin, whose ancestors were already distinguished in the days of the Thirty Years' War. Still, he would have liked it best if his wife had not undertaken the task of marrying off Hildegarde. Then he wouldn't have come in such close touch with her family. Whenever a letter from the Wiedemanns came, he always had a sensation that he was handling a matter not altogether clean. After he had read the letter through, he would wash his hands with the greatest care. Frau von Warnow was much worried about Hildegarde. She must not take a position; that would compromise her aunt too much. She wouldn't take her into her own house either, so there remained but one way out: Hildegarde must become engaged this season at all hazards. But to whom?

Frau von Warnow pondered over it the whole night before the entertainment. Who should be Hildegarde's neighbor at table? Only towards morning did a saving thought come to her. It was so simple she couldn't understand why it had not occurred to her before. Winkler must marry Hilde-

garde. During breakfast she explained the plan to her niece. The latter listened without showing any special interest. What did it matter, so long as she escaped from the domestic relations, from the terrible worry about money, if she only need listen no longer to the eternal and ever-repeated reproaches. A subtle, resigned smile played around her lovely mouth. "So this time the anchor of salvation is called Winkler. In your eyes it is of no consequence, still I'd like to know how he looks. Is he nice?"

Frau von Warnow was embarrassed for a moment. "I don't know him as yet myself."

"And still you recommend him to me for a husband?" The accent bespoke irony and bitterness.

Frau von Warnow would not be swerved from her course. "What do you want? He's rich, his father is estimated a millionaire many times over. He is exactly the thing for you. Have I not spoken of him to you before? No? Well, then, I must have forgotten his name. Thank the Lord, one rarely comes in contact with 'Buergerliche,' so that it is not necessary to remember names. It's different with Winkler. He now belongs to our regiment, is in my husband's company. I suppose you know Erich's views about 'Buergerliche' officers? Still he has had to admit that Winkler made admirable efforts, and that he will probably succeed, in the course of time, in creating a sort of position for himself among us. If Erich says that much, it means a good deal, a decided recognition. Till now, Winkler, of course, is still on the outside, although he has been with us for

more than half a year. You know prejudices of caste are not so easily put aside. Winkler is in a false position, he is not taken for full value, but all that would change the instant he was engaged to you—he would then be remotely related to us. Through you he would belong to one of the most prominent families. As your promised husband, he would not only be invited to the most exclusive houses occasionally, as he is now, but he would be, in a sense, at home there."

Frau von Warnow did not seriously mean what she said; on the contrary, she herself would never recognize Winkler as a relative. The rest of the family would consider such a marriage as a *mésalliance*. Winkler would either not be received at all, or he would be restricted to formal intercourse, and to the exchange of the most indispensable civilities. All that was of no consequence, of course. The main thing was that Hildegarde should make her match.

Frau von Warnow was silent for a moment, exhausted by her long speech. Then she turned to her niece: "What do you think of my plan?"

Hildegarde did not answer. What was the use of saying: "It's horrible to marry in such a manner a man whom I don't know, whom I have never seen, and of whom I can't even say whether I should like him or not."

The aunt was so preoccupied with her plan that she did not even notice Hildegarde's silence. She did not wait for an answer, but went on: "Of course, Winkler takes you in to dinner this evening."

"But wouldn't it look rather odd if I had a relatively young officer as neighbor at table, when perhaps older gentlemen will have to go in without a lady."

Frau von Warnow bit her lips in vexation. Hildegarde was right; it wouldn't do to show her intention too plainly. After a moment's thought, she began: "Perhaps you are right; I'll arrange it differently. Freiherr von Mazemann may take you in and Winkler sit on your other side. Since he comes to our house for the first time to-day and belongs to Erich's company, it will seem all right if I give him a prominent place. I shall say a few friendly words to him, perhaps persuade Erich to welcome him at table with a little speech."

But Erich refused flatly: "That would be going too far. I couldn't excuse that before my comrades. It would actually provoke a protest. I cannot avoid inviting Winkler as a member of the regiment and an officer of my company. But to toast him to-night when, aside from the servants, he is the only 'Buergerlicher' in our house, is simply unthinkable!"

His wife's plan to have Hildegarde engaged to Winkler did not meet with his approval. "Winkler as a relative? Thank you! Next thing he and I would 'thou' each other. I'd rather Hildegarde shouldn't marry at all than to take a 'Buergerlicher' for a husband."

He walked up and down scolding, and quieted down only when his wife, in order to appease him, said, though she did not mean it: "Oh, we are not

as far as that yet. If it comes to that, we shall see what is to be done."

Just then the servants entered to complete the preparations for the dinner. For the present the matter was dropped. It was time to dress for the dinner, and the two only met again as the first carriage was arriving.

"What makes Hildegarde so late?"

At last she appeared with the first batch of guests. She looked beautiful in her yellow dress, though her mouth showed a somewhat tired line.

Carriage after carriage entered the doorway. The great reception hall filled more and more. All the arrivals knew each other, and when they met at Warnow's, general conversation was quickly under way. They had barely seen each other during the whole summer. Now there was no end of questions, where and how the summer had been spent, and talk of coming society events, and court balls on the programme in the near future.

Among the very last Winkler entered. He came late purposely, in order to find the whole company assembled, so that he could be presented to all of them in shortest order. He hardly knew any of the ladies. Few of them had received him when he made his first official visiting round.

Was it accident or intention that deathly stillness prevailed when he made his appearance? George noticed how the ladies suddenly dropped their conversation and stared at the strange face. For a moment he was embarrassed. He did not even know his

hostess. Which one was it? Then Frau von Warnow advanced, and Winkler quickly drew near and kissed her hand.

"A hearty welcome to you, Lieutenant Winkler; I am so glad to see you with us."

The words were audible to everyone. Frau von Warnow had accomplished her purpose. It could not seem strange if she afterward showed him more attention. She exchanged some friendly words with him, and then presented him to the ladies.

At last she turned to her niece: "Hildegarde, permit me—Lieutenant Winkler."

So far Hildegarde had remained in the background. In a way she had attempted to avoid the presentation. It was painful to her to confront the man about whom the conversation of the morning had taken place. She could hardly conceal her embarrassment. But George noticed nothing. He bowed to her, and then went out into the hall to take off helmet and sword. Hildegarde breathed a sigh of relief. The first meeting was over. She made up her mind she would engage her other neighbor at table in conversation and pay no attention whatever to Winkler. But when later on the company entered the dining-room and sat down to the table adorned with fresh flowers, Hildegarde soon discovered that her partner had not grown any more intellectual nor any more amusing since she had met him last year. Freiherr von Masemann was of the most ancient nobility, and a very conscientious officer. In other respects he was a nonentity. He strove with all his might to

appear as the most distinguished among the distinguished. That was no easy task, since there were counts and barons in the regiment. So he concluded that it was his sacred duty to demonstrate by his appearance and demeanor his high rank and distinguished station. He was reticent and self-contained, because he considered that distinguished. He spoke little, because he deemed it more aristocratic to observe. Now he only inquired of the lady how she had been during the long time since he had the honor of seeing her last. He asked how long she intended to stay this season. When he had learned what actually he was not interested to know, he considered his whole duty discharged. He remained silent, and when Hildegarde endeavored to entertain him he listened with a kind of artificially interested expression, now and then interposing a yes or no or some other indifferent brief remark as a matter of courtesy.

“Baroness, would you have the goodness to take the dish?”

With a brief excuse she turned to her neighbor on the right, took the dish out of Winkler’s hand, and handed it over to her neighbor to the left.

“May I trouble you once more, Baroness.”

She turned again to the right and looked at Winkler for the first time. Till now she had avoided it intentionally. She was struck with surprise at his intelligent expression and at the seriousness of his eyes. In his whole manner there was nothing that betokened the officer of the guard, whose sole ambition is to appear as blasé and unintellectual as possible.

Something else pleased her too: the look of genuine admiration, almost of reverence, with which he gazed at her. She saw at once that she pleased him, that her beauty made a deep impression upon him. It was a great relief to her that he did not at once begin to pay court to her, in the manner of other young officers, to play the irresistible who needs only a wink of his eye in order to make the conquest of every young girl he meets.

“Perhaps appearances deceive,” thought Hildegarde, “but I have gained some knowledge of men, and I believe he is good and serious.” Suddenly she felt a desire to talk with him. Apparently he had not the courage to address her first, possibly did not know what he might properly say to her, an entire stranger to him. So it was for her to start the conversation. Then she suddenly remembered that she was to try the conquest of the heart of the young officer by her side, his heart and his money, in order to free her parents and her brother from their financial worries.

A hot flush rose to her cheeks. She bent low over her plate, so as to avoid looking at him.

He misunderstood her embarrassment, and said with honest candor: “I beg your pardon, Baroness, if my looks offended you. I can only offer the excuse that I have never yet found so much beauty and grace united in one person. It was by no means my intention to grieve you.”

That sounded so frank and honest, that his words accomplished the opposite of their purpose; again a

flush mantled her face. In her heart she felt that she was really unworthy of the young officer.

She regained her composure, and with an effort at jesting, she said: "You begin your compliments before the champagne, Lieutenant."

"I am glad that you are not angry with me," he replied.

The ice was now broken, and they began to talk together. George had a pleasant way of speaking and a fine voice. It was a pleasure to her to listen to him. Every word he said made it clear to her that he was a thoroughly cultivated man, who had read a great deal, had serious interests, and that he surpassed by far, in knowledge and intellectual culture, all his comrades.

"If I had not become lieutenant, I should have studied political economy," he said, in reply to one of her remarks. "My father has a very large factory, employing thousands of workers. He is always endeavoring to improve their social and material condition. He provides healthy and cheap homes for them, has founded a library, playgrounds and recreation places for the children; in short, he does everything possible to ameliorate their condition. Naturally my father has talked to me about all these things. He has given me many books to read, and what I didn't understand at first he explained. As I said, if I had not become an officer, I would devote myself to political economy."

"And why did you become an officer? First of all, does your calling give you satisfaction?"

He only replied to her last question: "I have been but six years in the army, and cannot yet answer with a direct yes or no whether this occupation will give me lasting satisfaction. Naturally I hope and believe it will; if, later on, I should find that I was mistaken, I should quit the service, and after a time take over the management of the factory. My father has given me free choice in all such matters. What I shall do will depend in a degree on the position I can make for myself here in the regiment. You will understand that without further explanation on my part." With a clever turn he introduced another subject and then began to tell her more of the factory. Hildegarde listened with lively interest. What she heard was entirely new to her. Of the life of the other half and their work she had no idea; she had never given thought to it. The families she frequented either lived on their income or managed their poverty-stricken estates as noblemen. Among them, to work for money was looked upon as degrading. Time seemed to fly; she talked only with George and forgot her partner altogether. The latter tried to address a few meaningless phrases to her, but when he noticed that she kept on speaking with George he turned away again. His main occupation at table was to observe the manner and behavior of his younger comrades, whether they were correct in every particular. That was his specialty, for which he was feared. Hardly a social affair passed that did not give him an opportunity for taking a young comrade to task on the next day. He was considered a high authority

in the realm of good manners, and his lessons were valued. Unfortunately he had a disagreeable vein of irony and sarcasm in imparting his wisdom, and young officers dislike that more than bluntness.

Hildegarde looked up in surprise when the company rose from the table. In her aunt's house she had often yearned for the end of the dinner while sitting by a lieutenant, who was telling her of his stupid recruits, or retailing a lot of stale jokes. Now she regretted it. An informal ball closed the festival. It was past midnight when the guests left. Hardly was the last gone, when Frau von Warnow embraced her niece. "Hildegarde, I am so glad. I watched both of you during the dinner. Afterward Winkler did not take his eyes off you. This time it will end seriously. It was easy to see that he was smitten with you. I shall write to your father about it to-morrow."

The words struck Hildegarde like a dash of cold water. For the first time she had really enjoyed herself at an entertainment. During the lively conversation she had forgotten her own fate and the miserable condition of her parents. Now it all rose before her clearly; she felt crushed.

"Mark my words, Hildegarde, in three months, at the latest, we shall celebrate your engagement. If you had always been as engaging and charming as you were to Winkler you would have been married long ago. To-night you did admirably. Winkler had to fall in love with you."

Hildegarde was struck as if by a blow. In the course of the evening she had forgotten that her

aunt had a plan regarding Lieutenant Winkler. Now she was told that she had spread her net cleverly. What seemed like an insult to her sensitiveness appeared to her aunt as an achievement worthy of praise.

A hasty answer was on the tip of her tongue, but she controlled herself and kept her peace. Long since she had given up every endeavor to justify herself. Her aunt would not believe her, they would not understand each other.

She was glad when at last she could seek her own room. Then she burst into passionate tears. She was not conscious of any guilt, and yet she felt like sinking into the ground for very shame.

IV.

Several weeks had passed. The fifth company went on watch at noon under George's command. George was in very bad humor. He had just spoken his mind to a non-commissioned officer by the name of von Nissen, the favorite of the captain. The captain insisted strongly that no abusive language should be used. He wanted his non-commissioned officers to behave like perfect gentlemen. George had realized long since the impracticability of this course. Certainly he disapproved of all abuse of soldiers, of blows and tortures, of rude behavior towards subordinates; on the other hand, he also knew that at the right time a vigorous bit of profanity did wonders. The men actually expected that there should sometimes be a hail of "donnerwetters" around their heads. The captain was so refined that he would almost have liked to address his soldiers as "sir." On the quiet, the fellows laughed about their superior. George was convinced the company did not do all it might; it often seemed to him as if the Polacks and Eastern Prussians in his old regiment were more presentable and more efficient soldiers than these parade troops who were handled with kid gloves. The non-commissioned officers of the company followed in their captain's footsteps, partly because they agreed with him, largely from motives of self-preservation, be-

cause Herr von Warnow would pitilessly get rid of any non-commissioned officer whose scolding or cursing gave him annoyance. To George the most disagreeable of the non-commissioned officers was von Nissen, a former one-year volunteer, who had failed on the way of promotion to officer's rank. Because of his nobility he was the captain *enfant gâté*, and was to be promoted by and by to the rank of sergeant. He was an eye-servant of the worst kind, always faultlessly dressed, and making a good impression as to his outward appearance. George did not know how it was, but from the very first day he disliked the man; he mistrusted his grey, crafty eyes. It was especially disagreeable to him that this particular non-commissioned officer had been detailed to teach him the ropes, as it were, so as to be able to tell him at any time: "The captain desires this done so-and-so."

George disliked the manner in which his subordinate treated his men. Nissen was always outwardly civil toward his subordinates, but his words seemed to contain some secret threat. Often George had noticed how the men trembled before those piercing, lowering eyes. He was struck by this again this morning. The non-commissioned officer had spoken to a man who had made a mistake in his drill, apparently using the friendliest of terms, while his looks portended nothing good. When George turned away, he heard Nissen whispering to the man: "Before you go on watch, you report to me; I shall have a word to say to you to rouse your sense of honor." The

soldier's face blanched, and George called the non-commissioned officer aside. He knew the expression, "rousing the sense of honor"; he knew that it was always done with blows and ill-treatment. He said so to Nissen; he disapproved of the order that the man should report; and earnestly admonished the non-commissioned officer to do nothing improper. Nissen looked astonished and insulted. How could the lieutenant think that of him? He never did anything wrong, as the captain knew very well; therefore the captain had given him full permission to take the men in hand whenever they did not do their duty.

Von Nissen stalked around as if he had received a deadly insult, and George felt that the captain would have it out with him for daring to doubt his favorite.

His premonition came true. The captain saw at once there was something amiss with his favorite, and asked the cause. Nissen, realizing full well that, under the rules, he could enter a complaint against his lieutenant only after twenty-four hours, would not say anything at first. Finally, obeying a direct order to speak, he told the captain what had happened, twisting his words so cleverly that what appeared a simple statement of facts yet contained a complaint about the wrong done him.

Herr von Warnow listened in silence, and then said: "I shall speak to the lieutenant." When he met Winkler he said rudely: "I have frequently observed, Lieutenant, that you mistrust and suspect the 'non-com' Nissen. Let me tell you he is

the best ‘non-com’ in my company. You only know him for half a year, but I have known him for three years. He has never given the least occasion for reproof. His pleasure in the service and his zeal must suffer through your fault-finding. His sense of honor must be deeply offended, if you consider him capable of such a shameful offence as the ill-treatment of soldiers. I must ask you to consider this seriously, Lieutenant.”

On returning to his division, George felt it very unpleasant that he had to supervise the service with Nissen. He noticed the malignant look in the man’s eyes, and yet had to act as if he saw nothing. He felt no wish to be harsh to him again, and to receive in return rudeness on the part of his captain. Till now, the relation between him and the captain had been fairly good, and he did not wish to destroy it intentionally. “It is no concern of mine,” he said to himself at last, “I am not responsible for the company, and the captain is; if he sees perfection in that ‘non-com,’ I can stand it.”

He resolved not to bother with the “non-com” in the future, and within a few weeks he found that things went better in that regard. Evidently the captain had made inquiries whether he let Nissen alone, and had been answered in the affirmative. The captain grew more amiable toward him.

As to the service itself, George did not fare badly. The inspection of his men turned out satisfactorily, his winter work had been praised, his task as a practical officer had met with approval. He was decidedly

a good officer, his appearance in front of the men, his personal conduct, his behavior towards his subordinates, never gave occasion for reproof. He was strict but just and always equitable in his manner, and so won the confidence of the men. When one day his orderly fell sick and had to be transferred to the hospital, and the question was put to the soldiers who would volunteer to serve meanwhile with Lieutenant Winkler, almost the whole company expressed their readiness. That pleased even the captain when he heard of it. The behavior of the privates gave George great satisfaction. It was an agreeable sensation to him to feel that he had gained the good-will of the rank and file. As to the service itself, things went well with George, but in regard to social comradeship he stood with the other officers precisely where he had been on the first day. He admitted to himself frankly that he had not advanced a single step so far. It was not his fault, his mode of life was without reproach, his appearance modest, he was courteous toward his seniors. Once he overheard a remark indicating that his comrades appreciated highly the fact that he did not make a showy use of his wealth, but lived with them in the casino on a modest footing.

George had taken great pains trying to become better acquainted with some of the comrades, to sound their true character, and to find out whether the aristocratic and reserved manner shown was only a mask, or whether it reflected their innermost nature. Particularly his comrade in the company,

Freiherr von Masemann, interested him in this respect. In his relation with comrades of his own age he always behaved as if he was at court. George thought that the tone prevailing at table was somewhat artificially polished. There was lively conversation, but no harmless mirth, no unrestrained joyfulness. George frequently felt bored. The conversation was mostly small talk about the court. Stories without point were told, stories that could be of interest only to the others because they concerned families of high nobility. As George did not know most of those families, even by name, the conversation had absolutely no interest for him. A serious subject was never touched. So he contented himself with the rôle of a listener. As he rarely found occasion to take an active part in the conversation, his reticence hindered somewhat his becoming better acquainted with the others.

By degrees the regiment had accommodated itself to the irrevocable fact that George belonged to it. But that was all. They no longer shed tears over it, but they didn't seem glad of it either. They were courteous, but in their intercourse they raised a kind of bar which excluded confidential and intimate relations. So it came to pass that George did not have a single friend in the regiment for whom he felt attachment. They showed a certain reserve toward him, especially his comrades of the same age. Yet, naturally, George ought to have become more intimate with them. The most supercilious among the supercilious crowd, strangely enough, seemed most attrac-

tive to George. It was Lieutenant von Willberg, the same who burst into tears at the time George's transfer was announced. He seemed possessed of a very devil of pride, but sometimes had lucid moments, as George called it, when he showed a pleasant, sunny nature, when his youthful, easy-going ways prevailed. At such moments George realized why little Willberg, in spite of his faults, was the spoiled fellow and the favorite of the regiment. George did not know of Willberg's behavior on the announcement of the transfer, and therefore often felt a wish to become more intimate with him. So far the occasion had never offered.

One day when George entered the regimental home, he found there quite an assembly. Several guests had been invited, comrades from other regiments, almost exclusively of the cavalry. Naturally, the guests were seated at the upper end of the table, with the older Yellow Butterflies. Those sitting at the lower end looked across not without envy. The Hussars and the Uhlans are looked upon with considerable respect by the infantry of the guard, because the cavalry is considered the most distinguished arm. It was noticeable how glad they all were to have such distinguished guests with them. Each vied with the other in amiability, even old captains and some younger officers of the staff, bachelors, who dined every day at the regimental home, made no concealment of the fact that they were pleased by the visitors and felt honored by their presence. When they rose from the table and repaired to the smoking-room for

coffee and cigars, comfortable large arm-chairs were offered to the guests, the Yellow Butterflies standing around in semicircle. Each endeavored to be noticed by the cavalry. To have dined with them was considered the highest distinction, for the cavalry sometimes accepted invitations from friendly regiments, but was extremely cautious in the selection of guests they admitted to their own home. Little Willberg outdid himself in his endeavor to be noticed by the cavalry. He stood by the side of Baron Gersbach, whose parents lived in his own province. He made himself as agreeable as possible in an endeavor to draw his guest into an interesting conversation. It seemed to make no impression upon the Uhlan, who sat there, his long legs outstretched, nonchalantly smoking one cigarette after the other.

But little Willberg was bound to impress him, if not as agreeable companion then as a go-ahead, lively fellow. At last he said: "How is it, are we going to have a little game by and by?"

Gambling was discussed openly in the regimental home. Of course it was prohibited. From time to time, at regular intervals, the king's orders regarding games of chance were read to the officers, and listened to with the reverence due to commands coming from such high quarters. Beyond that nobody cared for the prohibitory regulation. The superior officers knew about it, and closed their eyes. Now and then it happened that the commanders would gamble with their own officers. What could the superiors do? You might watch over the execution of an order in a

little town; in a great garrison it became an impossibility. Officers will gamble, and if they cannot do it in the regimental home or at the casino, they will gamble in some club, or with other regiments, or in their own quarters. Whoever wants to gamble, always finds the opportunity. Officially it is asserted, of course, there is no gambling. Besides, there is a difference between gambling and playing cards. If anybody loses twenty marks, it is nobody's business, nor if he loses one hundred. If somebody in bad luck loses a thousand marks, he is no more to blame than if he had put twenty marks on a card. If the superiors were to punish for playing every officer who touches cards, the number of officers would be reduced by more than half within one year. The lieutenants who are caught at cards are punished, for the regimental commanders who tolerate gambling are liable to be dismissed, if it is found that they have not succeeded in enforcing the royal orders. Each colonel would like to become a general, and is by no means anxious to risk his military existence unnecessarily by a report about gambling he might just as well omit making.

Little Willberg repeated his question, to which the Uhlan so far had not deigned to reply. Now the guest looked at him with astonishment. "You just wait a little, you'll get rid of your money quick enough. Have you got so much that you must absolutely lose it?"

Willberg boastingly put his hand to his pocket: "Quite full, a new supply arrived to-day."

Willberg did not know how it happened, but some-

how he felt a little awkward. It had taken him a good while to squeeze a thousand marks out of his "old man" for the purpose of paying some pressing debts. He felt that it wouldn't be quite the thing to risk the money at play. Yet he would have died sooner than to admit he had been only bluffing, and to make himself ridiculous before the Uhlan in his high boots with silver spurs. At all events, he was firmly resolved not to risk more than half of the money. If he should lose that he would stop. Should he win, then he would see what to do next.

Baron Gersbach was known as a great gambler. It was an open secret that he drew his main support from play. He had long since spent his own fortune. He had no allowance from home, and yet his pockets were always stuffed with thousand-mark notes. Some people wondered to see him still tolerated in the army. Evidently he had protection in very high quarters. Stories went around that even his superiors and men of the highest circles had gambled with him. Curiously enough he was an excellent officer, an exceptionally good horseman who had achieved success at the races. He might be called a professional gambler, but it was known that his play was faultlessly correct, faultlessly distinguished. He didn't gamble every day, but occasionally when he felt the necessity of making a great coup. He touched the cards only when an inner voice told him: "To-day you win!" Unless he felt sure of that, he could not be drawn into any games. So he really always succeeded in winning. It was somewhat astonishing that he could go on find-

ing people who were willing to let him win their money. But they all hoped that he might lose this time, therefore they tried their luck again and again. Those who had never played with him before considered it a great honor and distinction to be invited to a game with a Uhlan. You were not considered in full standing until you had played with him at least once.

From a sense of courtesy, they waited until the staff officers had gone away. One major felt it a hardship to leave. He was a gambler to the marrow of his bones, and would have liked ever so much to remain. They all knew it, but he owed a sacrifice to his position. It wouldn't do for him to take the money of the young lieutenants, at least not in the regimental home.

When the staff officers had left, the artificial steadiness of the rest gave way. George looked at his comrades in astonishment. They had often played in his presence, but he had never seen them so excited. It was the first time that their calmness and correct demeanor had disappeared. It was as if an evil spirit had taken possession of them, a wild agitation, the passion of gambling had seized them all. They were nervous and excited, preoccupied with the question: "Will you win or lose?" Their eyes shone, their faces blanched, their hands quivered with the growing excitement.

Only one remained entirely calm—the Uhlan. He sat back in his chair, his legs still outstretched, and did not seem to notice in the least the preparations

for the coming battle. Whether the same calm was within him, who could know? Externally, nothing betrayed excitement.

At last the gaming table was ready and the aide-de-camp of the regiment, Count Wettborn, turned to Baron Gersbach: "Well, how is it, are we going to have a little game?" It was for the Uhlan to decide. If he said no, the whole excitement went for nothing, since without him it would only be a kind of family affair, petty inoffensive gambling. The Uhlan, however, was in good humor to-day. This morning, rising, he felt so easy and well, that an inner voice had told him: "To-day you may risk a great stroke." But as a cautious man, he said to himself: "If my Leda takes the hurdle without a break, I shall risk it." And Leda had taken the obstacle three times in perfect shape. Then he looked in his carefully conducted diary to see what regiment he had not visited for a long time. The decision was in favor of the Yellow Butterflies. He was satisfied that they would be willing to pay a few thousands without a murmur and without a complaint for the honor of his visit. So he inquired by telephone of the aide-de-camp of the regiment whether he might come to dinner and bring a few friends. Count Wettborn was not exactly a light of science, but he understood the meaning of the question, and being himself a passionate gambler, he accepted joyfully.

The Uhlan rose from his chair with inimitable non-chalance and took the seat offered by his eager comrades. Putting his hand into his pocket, he brought

forth his pocket-book. The others noticed with a certain uneasiness the package of thousand-mark notes it contained. They were struck for a moment with the thought known to all gamblers. At play only the man who has the necessary funds and can stand passing mishaps, will win in the end. Surely the Uhlan had the necessary funds, who could buck against that? Then the aide-de-camp, Count Wettborn, put his pocket-book upon the table, and the Yellow Butterflies noticed with a kind of pride that it contained a little fortune. The count was rich and was in addition the fortunate nephew of a rich old uncle who gave him large sums of money from time to time.

“Isn’t he a fine fellow, our count?” one Yellow Butterfly whispered to the other. “We may well be proud of him, he’s all right from crown to sole, and so rich too, I believe even the cavalry envies him us.”

The others also went into their pockets. Those whose money consisted of notes of large denominations carried in a pocket-book, brought it forth with more or less ostentation. The others carrying a limited supply of coin, produced a few gold pieces. In the game of the “Merry Seven” bets from twenty marks upward were allowed. Little Willberg produced his thousand-mark note. Deeply in debt, he had been proud of its possession as he walked through the streets a little while before. He had felt easy and relieved as if everybody must see in him the owner of a thousand-mark note. He had felt himself rich. Now, compared with the amounts displayed in the pocket-books of the others, he felt miserably poor.

He was ashamed of his small means, filled with envy and dismay. Wasn't it an eternally miserable story, always to count with small amounts and to say to yourself: "You can't do this and you can't do that," always to be obliged to borrow money. It must be wonderfully nice to own a full pocket-book. It was *chic* to carry your money in such a pocket-book. In a small garrison it would not matter whether you had more or less money, but at the capital where you met so many distinguished and rich people, it was truly tragic not to own more than that trifling thousand-mark note.

The game had been going on for some time, the Uhlan holding the bank. "Well, Willberg, don't you want to bet? You were so impatient a little while ago."

Willberg roused himself from his musing. He had been standing in deep thought. The gold passing from hand to hand, glittering, had struck his eyes, rousing in him but one thought which took complete possession of him—to own all that money before him.

"Oh yes, quite right. Hundred marks on the seven. No, two hundred."

A second later the money was lost.

"Two hundred again."

They also went.

"Two hundred again." This time luck turned his way, fourteen hundred marks was paid out to him. He now bet four hundred, and won again, receiving almost three thousand marks as his winning.

"My man, you are in famous luck."

They marvelled at little Willberg as if he had accomplished the greatest miracle. Even the Uhlan gave him an approving look, paying his winning with a loud "bravo." This praise made Willberg so proud that he forthwith bet another four hundred marks on the seven and lost.

George had looked at the game for a long time without taking any part in it, now he found it a bore and thought of stealing away. He passed the reading-room, when somebody called to him. Turning around he saw first Lieutenant von Kirchberg seated in an arm-chair.

"Where are you going?" he inquired.

George felt guilty. It was not considered correct to take French leave. Still he said: "I am going home."

The other looked up in surprise: "Are you through? Lost everything?"

"I don't gamble at all, Herr Oberleutnant."

"Ach nee!" The other came near dropping his monocle, and looked at George for a while as if he couldn't comprehend. "Ach nee!" he said again, and then went on: "Come, sit down with me, you must tell me that. You must tell me how you manage to live without gambling, or rather how you can withstand the temptation?"

"I find that very easy, Herr Oberleutnant. The game has absolutely no charm for me. A few years ago, when I was in Monte Carlo, I looked on for hours at a time without wishing for a moment to bet."

"Ach nee!" The other still stared at him devoid

of comprehension. "Ach nee, I can't understand it. What do you do with your money, if you don't gamble?"

"What I don't use during the month, I take to the bank."

"Ach nee, can anybody do that? I mean, do you enjoy that? Why don't you spend all your money? You are not a merchant, but a young lieutenant. I can tell you, if I had money I should not put it away."

"Kirchberg, where have you been?" came the query from a comrade just entering. "You know, we are partners at play. Our first capital is gone to the devil. Have you got any more money about you?"

"Is the Uhlan winning already?"

The other scratched his ear. "Horribly."

Kirchberg lighted another cigarette. "Then we had better let him go on in his first fury. Let him take first the ducats of other people, then we shall try to get them back. Whom has he taken on just now?"

"Little Willberg. That fellow is in uncanny luck to-day, he bets steadily on the seven, and it turned up five times in succession. The fellow is rolling in gold, and naturally the Uhlan would like to get his money back."

"Has Willberg steady nerves?"

"How should he have? He is trembling with excitement."

"That's too bad, he's lost; I have got to take that in."

He rose and went back to the gaming-room. Involuntarily, George followed. He felt as if he must help Willberg, as if he must whisper to him: "Be sensible and stop now; pocket your winnings, and you'll have enough for a long time."

Willberg wouldn't think of stopping. For a little while luck had turned against him, but with another turn he began winning again. The others had long ceased to play, looking on at the battle between the two. Willberg was excited and nervous, feverish and trembling; the Uhlan perfectly calm, immovable like a statue, not an eyelash quivering, his hand not trembling in the least, when he pushed the winnings over to his adversary. He had to pay out large sums, the money that he had won before from the others was long gone. The notes originally taken from his pocket-book had dwindled down to a small heap. Gold and paper accumulated in front of Willberg until he had about twenty thousand marks in the pile.

The Uhlan counted his money. "I can accept a thousand marks on the seven for the last time; if I lose and have to pay out seven thousand marks, the bank is broke."

An indescribable excitement seized all of them. Never before had they seen the Uhlan losing so heavily. The Yellow Butterflies were full of pride that one of their own men should beat the famous gambler. Willberg decided to risk the last stroke. The seven had brought luck to him so often he would remain faithful until the end.

"A thousand marks on the seven."

The banker turned the cards: "Eight." Composedly he raked in the money.

"Again a thousand marks on the seven."

The cards showed six.

For a second lightning shone from the eyes of the Uhlan. He knew he had won the battle. It wouldn't be a quarter of an hour before he would recoup his losses. It would have been unthinkable that he should lose to-day, lose to this boy who kept on playing so foolishly, so thoughtlessly. And Willberg did lose, the money in front of him shrunk more and more. Several times the others felt the temptation of calling to him: "Stop now, save at least a few thousand marks." But as they had seen the Uhlan, their guest, lose all before, they had no right to caution the other fellow now.

"Well, Herr von Willberg, have you still courage?"

The latter stood there, pale as a corpse. Every drop of blood had vanished from his face. He had lost everything, even his own thousand marks that he had been so proud of. Not a single coin remained in front of him.

"Do you want to play on?" the Uhlan asked a second time.

Willberg looked around, perhaps some of the comrades might lend him money. But now the aide-de-camp interfered: "No, let it be enough for to-day for you, now the rest of us are going to try our luck."

The game went on. Willberg entered one of the adjoining rooms and collapsed into a chair. The tremendous tension of his nerves was followed by re-

action. He buried his face in his hands and broke down in convulsive sobbing.

Not far from him stood George, looking at his comrade with compassionate eyes. He did not understand how one could be so addicted to gambling, yet he felt pity for this poor fellow whose financial condition was no secret to him. He had been rich for a moment, now he was poorer than ever, because he had known for a fleeting instant the sensation of owning money. It occurred to George that he might approach his comrade offering him his help, but he did not have the courage to intrude, he did not wish to risk a refusal. He realized that he was right about that, when Willberg presently arose, having composed himself, and acted as if he didn't see George making ready to go home. Was he ashamed of his reckless gambling or of his tears? He left without even greeting George.

Therefore he was the more astonished when Willberg paid him a visit at noon the next day in his own quarters. He guessed from the first the object of this call, and his guess became a certainty when he saw his comrade's pale face.

After a few words of greeting, Willberg came to the point. "You were present yesterday evening, even if only as a spectator, and you are aware that I have lost all my winnings. I lost a thousand marks more which I had received yesterday to pay some pressing bills. I have tried to borrow the money from one of the comrades, but the Uhlans got them all cleaned out, every one of them, so that no one to-day has a penny.

Even our count walks around with an empty pocket-book. So I came to you to ask you for the loan of a thousand marks. I tell you openly and honestly that I am unable to fix the day when I can return you the money, but I shall do it as soon as I am able, upon my word."

"That isn't necessary at all." George had risen and taken from his desk the note which he now handed to his comrade.

Willberg squeezed his hand in gratitude: "You render me a very great service." After an instant he went on, visibly embarrassed: "I have still another request. I can rely on it, I trust, that you won't tell anybody I borrowed money of you."

"How should I?" George asked astonished.

This answer did not satisfy the other. "Don't take it amiss, I beg of you, if I ask you to promise me upon your word not to mention my visit to anybody."

George looked up in surprise. How did Willberg come to ask such a thing of him? But he said: "If it eases your mind, I'll cheerfully give you my word, though I don't see quite the object of it."

Willberg breathed a sigh of relief, and after thanking him again most cordially, he left.

V.

Weeks had come and gone; and George still occupied what he called the isolated stool in the regiment. He had no friend to whom he could attach himself, and who could be attached to him. His hope that Willberg would become more companionable since he had relieved him from his embarrassment, was not realized. On the contrary, Willberg seemed to know him less than ever, although he still owed him the money. George was not exactly vexed over it, he had had depressing experiences in that respect in his old regiment. Having grown up in other surroundings, he could not understand the ideas of the Yellow Butterflies in money matters.

They did not hesitate a moment to borrow of each other, even in the presence of the orderlies. They were not mincing about telling the orderlies: "Advance this or that for me," and the money was not always returned the same day. It was borrowing, borrowing, wherever possible, it was owing and owing in all nooks and corners. In the Stammkneipe where they met sometimes of an evening because they could not always sit in the regimental home, some of the gentlemen owed the waiter fifty, sixty marks of money borrowed, and besides, a hundred marks more for food and drink. Those who were deepest in debt to the waiter, lived at a high rate, ate the most expen-

sive dishes, drank the most expensive wines, and said on taking leave: "Muller, lend me twenty marks, you know you'll get them back." Yes, but when? Some of the gentlemen owed the waiter for many months without thinking of paying him. As long as they wore the King's coat, the money was sure enough. George noticed with astonishment that in this regard the officers in the capital were as strict as in his old garrison. There it happened that in the Stamm-kneipe which they had frequented for many years a breach took place between them and the proprietor. The officers of the garrison boycotted the place, pledging their word to each other that the owner should never again make a penny out of them. No one thought of paying the debts owing partly to the proprietor, partly to the waiters. When the proprietor complained to the commander of the regiment, the commander did not order payment within twenty-four hours. He gave his officers six weeks' time to get the matter settled. The proprietor and the waiters who needed the money badly might manage as they could till then.

George remembered another affair which had happen'd only a few weeks before. One day a first lieutenant appeared at dinner in great excitement, and said the hair-dresser whom they all patronized had written dunning him for the trifle of a few hundred marks, and threatening to collect the money by mail, as he needed it badly. The officer admitted frankly that the hair-dresser had sent him bills from time to time, but that he had never paid a penny. There was

a storm of indignation over the letter. Why should the man need money all of a sudden? Couldn't he wait? The few hundred marks were certain to be paid, and collection by mail is not resorted to by decent people. The upshot was an order to the Yellow Butterflies to boycott the hair-dresser. The debts contracted there by the officers still remained unpaid.

In regard to money they had easy consciences and lax principles. Debts were considered such only so far as they concerned money borrowed. What was owing to tradespeople, did not count. It was their business to give credit. They might wait two or three years, sometimes even longer, before they obtained their money. They ought to be glad to see their business frequented, and they had to pay for the opportunity of such distinguished custom which served to advertise them. Borrowing went on all around. Once it happened that the lieutenant owed twenty marks to his own orderly. This came to light at the discharge of the recruits. Before they left, the colonel asked the men: "Has any one of you a claim of any kind against the regiment? If so, let him report." One of the men advanced and spoke up: "My lieutenant owes me twenty marks he borrowed when money was sent to me from home." Upon investigation this was found to be true. The man finally received his money, the lieutenant was rebuked severely. Yet it was considered an outrage that a discharged soldier should expose his former lieutenant in such a manner. Whether the man was able to do without the twenty marks, nobody cared.

George remained an entire stranger to his comrades. Nobody noticed him. Therefore he was greatly astonished when one day after dinner the aide-de-camp sat down by his side, and engaged him in a long and friendly conversation. He did not understand the reason for this change of manner until light came to him, when Count Wettborn said: "I have meant to ask you for some time, why your father does not take steps to become ennobled? Of course, it is not easy, but your father stands in such high favor with His Majesty that the difficulties could be surmounted if he is willing to spend a few hundred thousand marks for some charitable work. He has the means, why doesn't he do it?"

"Because my father is proud of his 'Buergerlicher' name."

The count tapped the floor embarrassed, with his foot, then went on: "Certainly, your father is right, as far as he himself is concerned, but he ought to consider your position. You would occupy an entirely different position in society once you were a baron or a freiherr. The world, lays great stress on such things, and I think the world is right. Now that you belong to such a swell regiment, the nobility would be of very great value."

The count dwelt on the subject at length, and George began to realize that the aide-de-camp did not speak from a sudden impulse, but upon deliberate consideration, evidently inspired by the colonel or some other superior. The blood mounted to George's face, he blushed for the other who talked to him thus.

Did those noble lieutenants, who were nothing when they doffed the uniform, really consider a "von" bought for a few hundred thousand marks so much more valuable than an old "Buergerlicher" name that commanded the esteem of the whole business world?

He could not refrain from the reply: "Nobility has been offered my father often enough, but he has always refused."

"I can't understand that." The count fumbled with his monocle and looked at George perplexed. "I really don't understand it," he repeated. George realized that he was in earnest. He could not comprehend that nobility might be refused for the sole reason that somebody took pride in his "Buergerlicher" name.

For a time the aide-de-camp sat in silence, then closed the conversation, saying: "You might write to your father again about this matter, or talk it over with him. Perhaps you may change his views."

George made no answer. He knew how his father laughed at people who, having become possessed of a large fortune, had no other ambition than to be ennobled. He almost resented the aide-de-camp's talk to him as an insult. On thinking the matter over calmly, however, he could not find so much fault with him. Did not he himself notice daily the preferences enjoyed by nobility, even in our own enlightened time? Didn't he know how men meriting distinction and praise were rewarded by elevation to the aristocracy? Was not nobility preferred in the army? If three officers of equal qualification were considered for pro-

motion, one of them being a noble, was not almost invariably the nobleman selected? If in an exceptional case a "Buergerlicher" won in the competition, was he not ennobled shortly afterward? The rank of officers, as the old saying goes, was only for the nobility. That seemed true down to the present day. If a "Buergerlicher" did not distinguish himself in a striking way, he could not advance in his career and remained behind.

Was it different in society? George had now attended enough entertainments to know that everybody bowed before nobility, that the youngest noble lieutenant was preferred to a "Buergerlicher" staff officer. He had noticed often enough how they whispered about him, how they could not believe that he belonged to such a swell regiment. Though the words were spoken in low tones, he had overheard a young lady whispering to her friend at a ball: "If Lieutenant Winkler tries to engage me, I shall tell him my card is filled. I don't dance with a 'Buergerlicher' as a matter of principle." The other ladies too always considered him as a stranger. A slight inclination of the head was his only greeting, and the few who would shake his hand did it without interrupting their conversation. They treated him in a way showing their condescension. On such occasions he felt isolated. His comrades talked and laughed with the ladies, had a thousand secrets and a thousand little confidences, while he stood bored in a corner. He was a stranger, and nobody took pains to introduce him and to assist him in making acquaintances.

The only person who was always the same toward him was Hildegarde. They met often in society, and a cordial friendship had sprung up between them. Hildegarde had spoken of herself and George to her relatives as the two "outcasts." George was not yet introduced, while she was *passée* in society. She had been a young girl for so long that interest in her was dying out. She was invited because it could not be avoided, but people hoped she would refuse. When she came after all, mocking remarks passed behind her back. Hildegarde acted as if she did not notice. Yet she understood the looks with which people gazed at her, and if she didn't hear the words, she knew what the whispered remarks meant. She felt it as a great sacrifice to go to such affairs, and would say to herself after every one: "That was the last to-day, to-morrow I go home."

But the mortal fear of her home always caused her to think: "I'd rather endure those remarks than face the misery and distress and the insulting reproaches that would await me there." Sometimes she admitted to herself frankly that she also remained for George's sake. Not that she was in love with him. She had been told so many times love was nonsense. All that mattered was whether a man had money or not. Her relatives had talked before her about the most sacred sentiments with such brutal frankness that she believed her heart was no longer capable of love. In George, however, she saw a true friend. He was always attentive to her. When he saw that she stood alone, he came to her side. She felt his eyes

resting upon her, and his looks seemed to say; "I don't know what sorrow oppresses you, but I feel that you are strange and lonely here like myself, and therefore I will do for you whatever I can."

They met again this evening at the American Legation during a great reception, and she was glad to see him. To please him she had dressed with special care, putting on a new costume, a gift of her aunt. In joyful expectation she had begun to dress earlier than usual. A quarter of an hour before the time to start, she stood before the looking-glass smiling to herself. She was glad of her own beauty, she knew that to-night she would attract attention.

She was still standing, lost in thought, when a knock at her door startled her. "Is it time? I am ready."

"Baroness, there is plenty of time, the carriage hasn't come yet, but here is a special letter for you." Hildegarde was startled. A special letter, what had happened?

She opened the door, and took the letter from the hand of the maid. Recognizing her brother's handwriting, she felt a shock.

Aggravated, she threw the letter upon the table. Without opening it she knew what it contained: a request for money. She was filled with disgust. "That he must spoil my pleasure. How can I ask aunt for money on his behalf when she has just given me this expensive dress?" All her happiness was gone. She thought: "That letter shall not spoil my

evening, I will read it to-morrow or to-night when I come home."

But at last, she opened the envelope and read:
"Dear little Hildegarde:

"You know the old joke of the night-watchman who rouses a wife from her bed and calls to her: 'Frau Meyer, don't get shocked, your husband is dead.' So I say now: 'Dear Hiledgarde, don't get startled, but I need four thousand marks.' I have the devil's own luck. Yesterday morning I received a heap of dunning letters. I don't know where the people who suddenly ask me for money come from. Where can I get it without stealing? I have tried my luck with the cards. They also seem to be in a conspiracy against me. When I woke up this morning with a headache I realized that I was in for it for four thousand marks. Thank the Lord, they have given me three days' grace, but by that time the matter must be settled, or else nothing remains for me but to put a bullet through my head. You know very well, the other debts are not so pressing, but gambling debts are debts of honor, and our honor must not be tarnished. Rather than that, we have to take leave of this world. Better dead than live without honor. As I said before, I need four brown rags, and you have got to get them for me. It will be so much easier this time to ask you for this favor since I have learned with genuine pleasure that you are about to become engaged. It is high time after all, Hilda, for you and for us. In fact during the last years you have lost your looks considerably. The last time I saw

you, I felt shocked. Understand me; you are still a pretty girl, but in comparison with former times? The main thing is that this Winkler, or whatever his name is, dotes on you. What sort of a fellow is he, anyway? Aunt wrote to mamma that he is paying furious court to you. You may imagine that they are transported with joy at home. Papa wrote me because of the good news he at once filled his wine cellar and drank a bottle of French champagne to your health. The German champagne won't do any more, the acid caused papa's stomach trouble. Aunt reported that your future father-in-law manufactures buttons. Horrible idea, is it really true? After all, the main thing is that he has plenty of 'buttons.' Keep him on the string. You still have beautiful eyes, use them properly and you have got him sure. When you are engaged, which I hope will be within the next few days, let the wedding follow quickly so that he cannot back out nor find out how we count upon his money. Once he is my brother-in-law, I'll draw his ducats, never you fear.

"Well, Hilda, enough of that for to-day. Service calls me. The colonel has ordered a meeting of the officers, the royal regulations about courts of honor are to be read to us again. Nonsense! As if we did not know how to conduct ourselves as men of honor. The man who doesn't feel the spirit within him will never learn it by snoring more or less loudly, while those endless orders are being communicated. Pray send me the four mille. Uncle will give them to you at once, if you tell him that the money will be refunded

immediately after your wedding. One more thing I want to tell you; have your marriage contract drawn up before a notary, and insist on a considerable allowance of pin money. In your place, I should not accept less than forty mille annually. Let him pay for it, if he wants to marry into our respectable family. By the way, things seem to go badly at home, in spite of the French champagne, which papa obtained on credit at the news of your coming engagement. Papa wrote me I might send him a few thousand, or at least a few hundred marks if I had a lucky stroke at the gaming table. Oh, if the old man had any idea of the predicament I am in! Hilda, do your best, and accept hearty greetings and kisses, from your faithful brother,

“FRITZ.”

During the reading of these lines, the blood receded from Hildegarde's face. She stood motionless, seized with disgust, such as she often felt on receiving news from home. She tore the letter into a thousand bits and threw them to the floor. Then dropping into a chair, she buried her face in her hands. “That they are not ashamed to write to me thus,” she cried. “That they have the courage to look upon me as a wanton selling herself to the highest bidder. How did Fritz write: ‘Let him pay for it, if he wants to marry into our respectable family.’ Respectable!” She laughed bitterly. “We are bankrupts and gamblers, people with whom nobody would associate if we didn't have a noble name. If a man wears a uniform and

belongs to the nobility, he *must* be a man of honor.” She started up as her aunt entered to see whether she had finished her toilette.

“Hildegarde, how you look! What has happened?” Hildegarde shrugged her shoulders in disdain. “What has happened? You see the torn letter. Fritz has gambled again, he needs four thousand marks, and I am to beg the money from you.” With a passion she could no longer control, she suddenly cried out: “Aunt, how did you come to tell my people that my engagement to Winkler is impending? That was wrong, more than wrong of you. The inevitable consequences have followed. Both father and Fritz have contracted debts upon debts on account of the future son-in-law and brother-in-law. Let me tell you this, Aunt, I do not know whether Winkler is in love with me, I hardly believe it. But if he should love me and ever propose to me, I know what I should do. I should open his eyes, I should tell him when he asks for my hand how I have been sent year after year to the capital to catch a rich husband, how my relatives count upon his money, how they think of his ‘Buergelicher’ name. I shall tell him all; for if I do not love Winkler I respect and esteem him far too much to betray him. He must see clearly, he must know into what an honorable family he is going to marry. I shall tell him all.”

“You will do no such thing.” Frau von Warnow had listened in consternation. It took her a long time to compose herself. “You will not do it,” she exclaimed excitedly, “it is your duty to think not only of your

own family, but of us as well. I will not reckon what we have done for you. True, we are rich, but we should not have spent thousands upon thousands upon you, your parents and your brother, if we had not considered it as a matter of course that you would refund the money later on. If you say you are going to tell Winkler everything before the wedding, you are simply uttering a stupidity. The few thousand marks don't amount to anything for a man of his large fortune, and he is shrewd enough to say to himself that a young and beautiful woman like you takes a 'Buergerlicher' lieutenant solely for his money. If you confess everything to him in advance, you caution him, as it were, not to marry you. What remains for him then but to withdraw? And what then?"

Hildegarde shrugged her beautiful shoulders. "What then? That's of no consequence to me. I shall not starve, I told you before that I should look for a position."

The aunt laughed derisively: "You are crazy! What have you learned? What can you do? Do you know anything about housekeeping or about cooking? You couldn't even go as a companion. Your music is worse than indifferent, you cannot read to people, your knowledge of foreign languages amounts to nothing, how are you going to earn your bread?" She had spoken with cruel irony. But now, perceiving the despondent expression in Hildegarde's face, pity prevailed, and almost tenderly she put her arm around Hildegarde's neck. "Don't be downcast, it will come out better than you think. I understand and can feel

with you that Fritz's letter excited you. He doesn't mean any harm. To-morrow I am going to urge uncle to send him the money. My husband must let him have it as a present, or else I will do it. Now hold your head high. It is time for us to go."

"Please go, Aunt, and let me stay at home. I am not in the mood to go."

"Hildegarde," the aunt thought she had not heard aright, "you want to stay at home? That will never do. You must not be missed at the reception to-day. The Court has announced its intention to be present. Do you think I gave you this expensive new dress for the purpose of hanging it up in your closet? What am I to answer when people inquire for you?"

A tired smile played around Hildegarde's mouth. "They will not inquire for me. They will be glad not to see me for once."

"And Winkler? What am I to reply to him when he asks for you?" The girl looked at her aunt in great astonishment.

"Don't you understand that it is on his account I don't wish to go? After the letter from Fritz, and after what we said to each other just now, it would be impossible for me to face him." Then she suddenly changed her mind. "No, you are right. I had looked forward to this day with so much pleasure that I am not going to have it spoiled at the last moment." The aunt embraced her tenderly.

"That is right, my child; come now, the carriage is waiting."

They drove to the embassy. They were rather

late, a great row of carriages was standing in front of the gate, and it took a long time before their carriage could draw up. Herr and Frau von Warnow conversed with animation about the occupants of the other carriages near them. They exchanged remarks about the style of the various vehicles, and hazarded guesses as to what personages of the Court would appear. Hildegarde sat silent in her corner. In reply to a question from her uncle, she complained of headache, and Frau von Warnow made her husband understand by a sign not to insist further. She could think her own thoughts without interruption. Why was it she had changed her mind and gone to the reception? She had felt a strong desire to meet George, to see a decent man for once, and to speak with him. She did not know herself how she was to set about it, but she was resolved to tell him. Bestow your favor upon another who is more worthy of you than I. Before allowing his homage further, she would tell him of her family and of her brother. If, after that, he continued to treat her with marked attention and to woo her, she would feel free from guilt towards him. She could look into his eyes openly and frankly.

“Aren’t you going to alight?”

Hildegarde started. She had been sitting with her eyes closed, without noticing that the door of the carriage had been opened. She followed the others, and a quarter of an hour later, entered the reception rooms where a brilliant assembly surged to and fro. There was a steady greeting, an eternal handshaking. Ex-

pectantly, all eyes turned toward the entry. They waited for the Court. Without confessing it to themselves, they were in feverish excitement as to whether His Majesty would notice them, speak to them, or distinguish them by a handshake. Each expected such distinction for himself, grudging it to the others; each hoped to be the only one in the room to be noticed by the King. George stood by Hildegarde's side. She had seen that he was seeking her, and she had hoped to be able to avoid him. But her tall figure made it easy for him not to lose sight of her. She feigned surprise when he addressed her, but she read plainly in his eyes that he had divined her feeling. He asked without further preliminaries: "Do you feel offended with me for any reason, Baroness?"

She looked at him openly and honestly. "No, Herr Lieutenant."

His face brightened. "Then I am satisfied." After a moment he continued: "You avoided me a while ago. Is it disagreeable to you if I remain standing at your side?"

Again her frank eyes met his. "Oh, no, Herr Lieutenant." After some hesitation she added: "Will you please take me to the table later on?" What she meant to say was: "I want to talk to you afterward." But she could not bring herself to utter the words.

He bowed. "If we should lose each other in the crowd, Baroness, let us meet again on this very spot. Is that agreeable to you?" She nodded her assent, and stepped back a little, for at this moment came the announcement of the appearance of the Court. A

mysterious hush fell upon the crowd; the murmur of voices died out; all looked upon His Majesty, who had entered the hall and walked with a friendly smile through the long rows of bowing guests. Now and then he would stop, exchanging a friendly word or a handshake. Every one so distinguished was almost devoured by the envious looks of the others.

Suddenly His Majesty stopped in front of George, extending his hand graciously. "Ah, my dear Winkler, how are you? I had an interesting report from your father to-day, and I shall ask him in the near future to make another report to me. You and your father must dine with me."

George bent over to kiss the hand of his King, but His Majesty had already seen Hildegarde, and greeted her, too, with a friendly smile. "Do you still go on turning the heads of my lieutenants, Baroness?" he asked jestingly. "It is easy for one as beautiful as you are." And again smiling and nodding to her, he proceeded on his course. In the hush which prevailed, His Majesty's words were audible throughout the whole room. All eyes turned to Hildegarde and George, who, pleased by the distinction they had received through the King's address, were yet somewhat embarrassed by the harmless royal jest. They stood silent side by side, both of them relieved when life came into the assembly, and the crowd began again to surge and mingle. They became separated and saw each other only when supper was served toward midnight. As usual, small tables were set out, and George was fortunate enough to find a table whose other occupants

were entire strangers to him. He could talk with Hildegarde without being interrupted. However, they were watched by the other people at their table. Some of the ladies talked unreservedly about the words addressed to Hildegarde by the King. One thin, tall woman even stared at Hildegarde impertinently through her lorgnette and remarked, quite audibly: "I don't understand why His Majesty finds the Fraulein beautiful."

The Baroness cast an unconcerned glance upon the speaker, and laughed aloud; then turning to George: "I can't tell you how glad I am of what the King said to you. I am firmly convinced that you have achieved with one stroke the position in society and in the regiment which so far you have endeavored to gain in vain."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Don't you believe it, Baroness, I am afraid the gracious words have injured me more than they have helped me. They will grudge to me and to my father praise from such high quarters. All that shall not spoil the pleasure I feel because of the distinction accorded to my father. Please do me a favor, and drink his health with me."

"Certainly, with pleasure." The glasses touched with a clear, ringing sound.

"You must make my father's acquaintance, Baroness," he went on, after a moment. "You would like him, though the others here naturally don't. They won't forgive him that he is not dressed in the latest fashion and ties his own necktie. You would like him. Perhaps it can be arranged that you make

his acquaintance the next time he is here. I will write him to bring my sister, to whom I have said so much in my letters about you that she is anxious to meet you."

She felt embarrassed. So he had written home about her, perhaps even confessed that it was his intention to ask her to be his wife. That awoke in her the recollection of her brother's letter. She must tell him before it was too late. She would do it now. Nobody paid any more attention to them. Only how was she to put in words that which occupied her thoughts? Before he had told her that he loved her, she could not very well exclaim to him: "Give up all thoughts of me, because on account of my family I never can be yours." If she spoke to him without apparent cause of the misery at home, would not that cause him to think she expected help of some kind from his father or himself? She found no way out. Another thing now occupied her. He had never before told her of his sister. Astonishment seized her. She said: "Herr Lieutenant, you have a sister? You never told me that before?"

He looked at her wonderingly. "Did I not? You must not blame me for it, Baroness, for in your case it certainly was not intentional."

"And why did you conceal it at all?" she inquired curiously.

George felt embarrassed and blushed like a child. "I hardly know myself, Baroness. Perhaps it is because one likes least to talk to others about things nearest one's heart. If I felt a desire to talk about

her, to whom could I speak? In the regiment nobody takes any interest in me, much less in my family, and I do not like to speak without encouragement." After an instant, he went on: "There is still another reason why I don't mention Elsa."

"What is it?" she asked.

"I don't know how to put my meaning into words. I should not like to be suspected of speaking ill of my comrades, neither should I like to pose as an angel of light, which I am not and cannot very well be at twenty-seven years of age. So much I can tell you; my comrades have a way of talking at the casino about young ladies in society which is revolting to me. No, not revolting," he corrected himself, "I always wonder and ask myself: 'Have those gentlemen no sisters? Because of their own mothers have they no reverence and admiration for the other sex that they should talk of it contemptuously as they do? In my old regiment, it was different. Perhaps we were not much better, but the smallness of the place, the close relations entered into with the individual families, had the natural result that we judged the young ladies with less freedom, less frivolity. I remember how once a comrade took the liberty of dropping an unseemly remark about one of the ladies while we were at mess. The orderlies were sent away, and the senior at table, an old captain, talked to the young lieutenant in the presence of all of us like a Dutch uncle."

"That is as it should be," Hildegarde interposed.

"Certainly," George assented, "yet I am all the

more astonished that it is not so with us here. The young ladies see in the lieutenant the highest ideal of romance. They would blush with shame if they knew how the gentlemen returning from a society affair or during the next noon-day meal, talked about them. The lieutenant would soon cease to be their ideal. Of course, there are exceptions, but the greater number of the comrades with us and in other regiments are exactly what I said. To them woman is an object for trade like a horse. Why is it that a young girl counts for very little with the lieutenants, that they talk of her without any trace of respect? I have pondered a great deal about it. Perhaps education is at the bottom of it. Most of them grow up in military surroundings, family life is unknown to them. They see their sisters and their friends only during leave. As cadets, they already strive to make conquests, and every conquest achieved results in lowering young girls in their eyes. Possibly the young ladies themselves are also at fault, for to them solely the lieutenant exists in society, and the civilian counts only if he is at least a reserve officer. The lieutenant thinks of nothing but conquests, and victory is often made too easy for him. I am not talking now of myself, for I am a stranger here, but often enough I hear my comrades tell of young ladies who make advances to them, send them love letters, won't wait till they are asked for a meeting, but beg for permission to meet them either at some place agreed upon or in their own quarters."

"But, Herr Lieutenant," Hildegarde interposed "surely no lady would do that."

"Certainly a lady ought not to do it," he assented, "but it is done all the same. Look around among this elegant company. How many of the women here have not had their more or less tender *liaison* with a lieutenant, not only the married women, oh no, but the young girls who seem so chaste and modest, and whose greatest pride for all that consists in having a past, in spite of their youth?"

Hildegarde knew that he was right. She remembered distinctly how in former years when she was more closely affiliated with the young girls of her own age, almost every one of them had her lieutenant. She had often talked to them about it, reproaching them for their conduct, but each had made the same answer: "Why shouldn't I do it when all the others do it? What is the use of being young and beautiful? Do you believe that our blood remains cool when they pay court to us the whole evening, when they press us to them during the dance, and look at us with devouring glances? Are we to wait till we are married? That may be a long while off, perhaps it may never be, and what then? Are we to die without having known the joys of love? It's too stupid!" They would tell each other with cynical candor how they managed to deceive their parents and to prevent the possible consequences of their intercourse. Perhaps Hildegarde was by nature too cold, too devoid of passion, for she never comprehended her friends. She could understand still less how the officers could

pose before the world as men of honor, and yet, without the least compunction, enter into *liaisons* with the wife or the daughter of the house they frequented, and where they received only kindness. Once within her experience an officer had coolly entered upon relations with a young lady who was on the point of becoming engaged to another. He looked calmly on when his comrade married the young woman, who had already passed through many hands, and, according to common gossip, had made a conquest of every man who took her fancy. "When I marry, I shall have exactly my twelfth wedding trip," she said. Her chums laughed to split their sides and envied her her good fortune with the men.

For a long time Hildegarde and George sat in silence side by side, each lost in thought. George misunderstood Hildegarde's silence. He believed her offended by his remarks, and he said: "I beg of you not to be angry with me, Baroness, for speaking so frankly to you. We have been brought up in entirely different conditions, and with entirely different views."

She felt a blush rise to her cheeks. Grown up under different conditions! It was her own merit only if she was not like her friends, her own merit, and perhaps that of her father and her brother, who continually wrote to her: "Don't throw yourself away; enter into no *liaison* with any one, unless you are sure that it will lead to marriage. Such a thing may be discovered, and then your price will go down, and all the hopes reposed in you will go to the devil."

She had wondered, oh, so often, whether her brother would be inconsolable if she wrote him some day: "I have not found a husband, but a good friend, whom I have accepted as lover. If you will forgive me, I will pay your debts."

She did not doubt for a moment that he would take the money in order to remain an officer, to go on playing the much envied and celebrated rôle of a lieutenant in society. Disgust often seized her when she thought of it—and yet—in that case would her brother do anything that others had not done? She once had a chum who made no secret that she took pay for her love. It was common gossip that the brother knew of it and borrowed money of his sister regularly when she wrote him: "I took supper yesterday with a very rich gentleman." With the money so earned by the sister, the lieutenant paid for his champagne and played the high-toned cavalier in society.

"Are you angry with me, Baroness?" he asked again, as she still remained silent.

She roused herself from her musings. "How should I be?" The subject had become painful to her for her own sake. In order to change it, she inquired about his sister. Visibly pleased, he told her of Elsa, how pretty she was, how good and kind, how they had always been the best of friends, how they had grown up as true comrades, how he had stepped into the breach for her many times, how once she came to his assistance with her tiny fists when he was about getting worsted in a scrap with a school-fellow. He

spoke in a merry mood, his eyes beaming with happiness, and she listened attentively.

“ Do you know, I envy you your sister? ” she asked, “ or, rather, I envy you the tender relation between you. Love between brother and sister is something very beautiful.”

“ Yes, but you, too, Baroness, are happily situated in having a brother——”

“ Please don’t talk about that now.” There was so much contempt and depreciation in her words that he looked up in astonishment.

“ But, Baroness, he is still your brother.”

“ You don’t know him. Please let us leave that subject.”

“ As you wish.”

In his embarrassment he emptied his glass and groped in vain for another subject of conversation. Both felt relieved when the company rose from the table. The ball kept those present till the early morning. During the dance George did not lose sight of Hildegarde. He had the pleasure of introducing to her some officers from other regiments and new partners, and felt almost happier than she herself over the success she achieved this evening. It was late when the gathering broke up. George had not succeeded in taking leave of Hildegarde. Rather disgruntled, he walked with a comrade toward his own quarters. His comrade must have been preoccupied with a very interesting idea, for suddenly he stopped and seized George’s arm. “ Will you bet that he will

get her after all? That would certainly be an uncommon piece of luck."

George looked at the other in surprise. "I don't understand you; of whom are you speaking?"

"Oh, come to think of it, you don't know Gastrow of the Hussars very well. Donnerwetter, he paid court to-night to Fraulein von Reisinger again. She is no longer young. She never was good-looking. The family is of the oldest Jewish nobility. The mother, I believe, is a born Moses. That doesn't matter in the least; she has got money, a horrible lot of money. If Gastrow really catches her, he's in fine trim; he needs it badly, for he is said to be broke. He owes two hundred thousand at least." George had listened without much interest. Now he asked:

"Isn't it shocking that we lieutenants—present company excepted—always let reason speak when selecting a wife? We live merry lives, we squander our money and our health, and when we reach the end of our rope, we look around at balls for some rich young girl to set us afloat again. The more money she has, the more we are after her. How few marry to-day with only the fortune required by the regulations."

"That's sheer nonsense; who can live on the few poor pennies?"

"Agreed, although many achieve the task. Looking at it from a psychological point of view, is it not an interesting fact that a lieutenant almost invariably falls in love with a young girl who is rich and likewise very ugly? Yet nobody will admit having mar-

ried solely for money. It is insulting and dishonorable even to think of such a thing. On the contrary, each fancies himself to be actually in love with his wife in spite of her ugliness and her bad qualities. If she had no money, naturally he wouldn't even look at her. Speaking candidly, I can't understand rich parents marrying their child to an officer. Those people must realize full well that their daughter is married for her money only. Still less do I understand the young ladies themselves. How can they be foolish enough to imagine that they were married for love?"

"With your permission," the other spoke up, "you advance queer views. According to your opinion, young ladies possessed of wealth shouldn't marry at all."

"Pardon, I did not say that. They should marry whom they please, but no lieutenant, because in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand he wouldn't think of marriage until he is in debt up to his neck."

"It is easy for you to talk so," the other replied. "It is easy for a born millionaire to condemn the doings of a poor devil. What you say is beautiful and noble in theory, but how about the practice? If ever I marry I would rather ride in my own carriage than in the electric car. Well, here our ways part. You go to the right, I to the left. When do you go on duty to-morrow?"

"Not during the forenoon."

“You are fortunate. I have instruction at seven o’clock. Good-night.”

After shaking hands, they parted, and a few minutes later George reached his quarters.

VI.

It had all come to pass as George had foreseen. The friendly words spoken by His Majesty at the embassy, the warm recognition given to his father, had not contributed to improve his position in the regiment; they only made things worse. Hardly a day passed when George was not discussed during his absence, and when the utterance of His Majesty was not considered. What induced the King so to distinguish the only "Buergerlicher" officer in the regiment? Even the commander had to content himself with a handshake. The remaining officers of the staff, not to speak of the rest, hardly received a friendly glance; George was the only one addressed. Was that accidental? Was it really only the report of the manufacturer of breeches' buttons—as they called old Winkler—that induced the favor? What could such a manufacturer report to the King that the latter did not know? True, old Winkler was said to be unique as to benevolent institutions for his workers, in his efforts for their material welfare, in his discovery of new ways and means to ease the existence of his employees. Everybody knew how deep was His Majesty's interest in the condition of the working classes, but for all that the public praise bestowed upon old Winkler seemed a little too artificial, if it was permitted to officers and loyal subjects

to criticise His Majesty's words at all. Or was there another purpose at the bottom of His Majesty's remarks? The King certainly knew how the regiment felt about George, how he remained a stranger among them and always would. Were His Majesty's words a hint to them, "Don't trouble yourselves, you will not get rid of Winkler. In me he has a mighty protector." Did he wish to encourage George himself by his gracious words to go on enduring, not to lose heart, though he had not succeeded so far in creating a position for himself?

Not a single Yellow Butterfly had ever been ordered to attend Court except on occasion of a great festivity. Then they would appear in a body, and would be proud of the distinction. Now the King had asked George publicly to eat with him, together with his father. It was known that His Majesty sometimes arranged such little informal affairs, where a lively exchange of ideas took place, when the King would astonish all by his surprising knowledge, when he would charm everybody by his great personal amiability. How did George come to participate in one of these intimate evenings? As the son of his father? Who and what was his father? A "Buergerlicher" manufacturer of breeches' buttons. That he was, and that he remained, even if he was wiser and more important than all the sages put together. They would not have envied the royal favor shown to George to any other comrade. They would have considered it as a mark of distinction for the noble caste to which they belonged. But they grudged it to

George because they considered, "If the 'Buergerlicher' class is so noticed and protected, what then remains for the nobility, which has done and is still doing, and will do in the future, for Germany, more than to manufacture breeches' buttons that have only the merit of cheapness and durability?"

The sentiment prevailed that His Majesty meant to say: "Do what you like, you will not get rid of Winkler."

So far they had only taken pains to ignore Winkler. Now they watched him, and while George remained always calm and modest towards his comrades, they began to show more superciliousness toward him than before. More than ever they flaunted their nobility and endeavored to show him what an insurmountable chasm separated them. Without saying so, they acted with a common purpose: "We will frighten him away; some day he must realize himself that he cannot stay with us." George thoroughly understood the sentiment toward him. Had he been able to deceive himself about it, his eyes would have been opened by one thing. Once every week little Willberg, with a contemptuous manner, offered him a formal excuse for not being able yet to pay back the loan of a thousand marks made to him in such a friendly way.

"I really don't need the money," George would reply. "On the contrary, my modest mode of life enables me to lay up savings, so that I could willingly help you out with another amount. There is no hurry about refunding."

George noticed that little Willberg would have been only too glad to accept the assistance thus offered. It was an open secret that he wouldn't be able to hold out much longer. Nobody could quite understand what became of his money. He gambled no more than the rest, but possibly women cost him a good deal. Almost every two weeks he had a new *liaison*. If a pretty young girl crossed his way he would not rest until he had made a conquest of her, considering neither trouble nor expense. But after he had been with her three times, he said, she had no more attraction for him, and he would sever their brief relations with almost brutal cruelty. No entreaties and no tears would lead him back to the one he had left. He would not remember promises made, and no power on earth could induce him to render the least aid to a former favorite, even if she was in the greatest distress or in the most horrible misery. He was the most outspoken egotist of love imaginable. More than one comrade in the regiment thought his conduct not quite correct, not quite gentlemanlike, but, after all, his affairs only concerned so-called "little girls," who had to put up with the treatment they received. It was their own fault if they had anything to do with him.

He had no luck with decent women. It was his greatest chagrin not to have had a single mistress whom he didn't have to pay. But he had possessed all of the purchasable dames. That flattered his vanity somewhat, if for no other reason than because in the eyes of the young girls of society it gave him

a particular air always to have a new mistress. He knew that his reputation made him interesting to the young ladies. He knew well that, in spite of his reputation, or rather because of it, it would be easy for him to make a rich match when he wished. The bride who succeeded in catching him would be envied and thought fortunate. He intended to marry, but his wife must have money, plenty of money, for he did not contemplate changing his mode of life as a husband. Then he would be able to spend for women thousands upon thousands, and not be obliged, as he was now, to count with miserable hundred marks, if he counted at all. He had no conception of money or its value. If he had succeeded in borrowing a few thousand marks of a relative, he could not rest until he spent them. He was always in debt, and just now things were very bad with him. He complained continually about hard times, and drank more heavily than usual in order to drown his cares. He borrowed of everybody in the regiment, and George foresaw that it would not be long before he would borrow again of him without refunding his old debt. That moment came sooner than George expected.

One day he left the Casino to go to his quarters earlier than usual. He had received a letter from his little friend Olga, a young actress of the Residenztheater, whom he had known for some time. She wrote she was going to join him at supper. At first he thought of sending her word not to come, because he had important work on hand; but finally he wired her: "Come, I expect you." He did not have the

heart to spoil the evening for her. She clung to him with hearty affection. She felt at ease in his elegant and comfortable rooms. She said she knew nothing pleasanter than to admire his belongings and to rummage in his library. They sat down at the neatly-covered table in the little dining-room, facing each other. George looked at her, smiling, as she enjoyed the oysters and the Pommery.

“ You may laugh,” she said, “ you have just come from dinner; but I haven’t eaten anything since three o’clock this afternoon.”

“ Eat, my child; it gives me pleasure to see you enjoy it. The more you eat, the more it pleases me. If you are through with these oysters, there is another dozen on ice for you, and afterward there will be your favorite dish, stuffed artichokes.”

She clapped her hands joyously like a child. Then she looked at him gratefully with her great dark brown eyes, and stroked his hand tenderly: “ How kind and good you are.”

“ Olga!” He was almost embarrassed at the warm tone of her voice. He tried to jest: “ Don’t be ridiculous, Olga. If all my goodness toward you consists in getting my housekeeper to cook for you what you like to eat, it doesn’t amount to much,” and after an instant he added: “ I am very fond of you, little Olga.”

She looked at him with happy eyes. “ Really?” And when he nodded to her and drank her health, she said: “ Do you know, I believe it of you, nay, what is more, I know that you love me, that I am

more to you than merely a little girl that comes to you in the evening and leaves you in the morning. Therefore I am immensely grateful to you; you can't imagine how much."

Suddenly she jumped up, nestled closely to him, kissing him passionately.

"But, Olga, child, your oysters are getting stale," he admonished her, since she wouldn't stop her caresses. Then she released him, laughing, and sat down again.

Olga was pretty as a picture, supple and of medium height, of faultless figure, with an intelligent face, wonderful brown eyes and a ravishing little nose. Everything about her was pretty. She had small, well-kept hands and a charming foot. Her whole demeanor was as sympathetic as her exterior. She might not be what you would call intellectual, but she was amusing and cheerful; one could talk with her for hours without being bored. She could talk entertainingly and appreciated a good joke. She would laugh so heartily that tears came to her eyes, and when she laughed her pearl-white teeth showed to advantage. One thing especially made her attractive to George: her candor. She made no secret of the fact that she had had other friends before and that she might have others later on. "I know, George," she said once, "the hour will come when we shall have to part. Our friendship will not last forever, and it may be good that it should not. When some day you tell me: 'Darling, this won't do any longer,' I shall go, and you may be sure that, even

if my heart is ever so sad, I shall not make a scene in your presence, but I shall kiss you and thank you for all the beautiful hours we have enjoyed together."

George knew she meant what she said, and would act accordingly. Olga was the ideal of a mistress, always cheerful, always in serene mood, never crusty, never demanding. Once only had she expressed a wish. For days George had noticed that something was on her mind. Only after he had urged her long did she tell him.

"You must turn out the light first, else I am ashamed to tell you; you must not look at me while I tell."

He laughed and did as she wished, and then she owned: "I should like a little gold watch."

When he kept silence, astonished at the modesty of her request, she went on: "Please don't be angry with me; I saw a wonderfully pretty watch in a show window. Its price was marked at a hundred marks; if that seems too much for you, a cheaper one will do."

When he had granted her wish, and bought for her an expensive watch, with a gold chain, she sat with him the whole evening without showing the least interest in him, but playing with her watch, laughing and crying with pleasure. At first she had been unwilling to accept anything from him. They had quarrelled about it. She only permitted him to make her an allowance when he told her, with firmness and decision, that otherwise their relations must come to an end. He paid for her rooms and for everything

she needed without spoiling her. He insisted for his own sake that she should be well cared for. Without her knowing it, he had started a savings bank book for her, paying in regularly every week a few hundred marks to her credit. "She should not be obliged to throw herself into the arms of the first comer when once we part," he said to himself.

He had gone to the bank and made a deposit for her to-day, and on the way back he had bought her a pretty brooch, as he now remembered.

"Olga, I forgot; see, I have here a trifle for you."

He rose and fetched the little box. He was pleased at the happy face with which she eyed the jewelry.

"George, it is really wrong of you to give me such presents," she scolded.

"Oh, never mind," he begged. "I don't give you any more than I can afford. Like all my presents, this is already paid for."

She thanked him again, with sincerity, and said: "Do you know, I am to be envied for having made your acquaintance? Understand me," she corrected herself; "you know well enough that I want nothing of you and ask nothing of you. I did it once about the watch, and was terribly ashamed of it afterward. If I had surmised you would spend such a horrible amount of money for me I should never have spoken, because I do not wish you to think for a single moment that I am nice to you and love you because you are rich."

"I know all that without your telling me. But

you were going to tell me why you were to be envied for your acquaintance with me."

"Because you are such a decent fellow, because—how can I express it? Each of my chums at the theatre has a friend and admirer. But what sort of people are they? Men about town in the worst sense of the word, living riotously, contracting debt after debt. If they make presents, they never pay for them. All they give they get on credit, and it spoils the pleasure for the recipient. With you everything is so decent, so solid. Your life is exactly like your character; one feels that one can rely upon you, that you are a thoroughly serious and trustworthy man."

George felt embarrassed. "Olga, Olga, declarations of love after such long acquaintance!"

"They are in order," she replied, and added, a little embarrassed: "It is exactly three months to-day since we met for the first time."

"Do you regret it?"

She kissed his hand. "You—you—I am so awfully fond of you. Why should I regret it?" Growing serious she went on: "You know I have told you before how a scoundrel of a lieutenant invited me to supper, made me drunk, and then betrayed me. When I found myself alone in the cab in front of my house without knowing how I came there, and without suspecting what had happened to me, I vowed to myself to remain a good girl henceforth, never again to have anything to do with a man. For a whole year I remained steadfast to my vow and lived on my

seventy-five marks wages. Then there came one man whom I liked, and who was very kind and good to me. Oh, it is so hard to remain respectable at a theatre. We, the small fry, envy the stars, who are dressed in silk and velvet, who perhaps have no more ability than we, and who occupy the high places only because they have a rich friend who pays for their gowns and uses his influence with the manager to get the girl promoted and entrusted with prominent parts. That's the way it comes about. The others do it, too, not only theatrical people. We are not really the worst. The others who do it in secret and pose as respectable girls are surely no better."

"Olga, empty your glass, and don't be downcast; be cheerful and merry."

After a brief struggle with herself her sunny nature gained the upper hand. "You are right; I can't undo what has happened. The lieutenant was a scoundrel all the same. I told you before that he committed suicide. That's the best he could do."

"Don't be so hard on him, Olga," observed George.

"Please don't defend him," she burst out angrily. "I know you think if a young girl accepts a lieutenant's invitation to supper she must realize beforehand what she has to expect. But I was young and inexperienced. I can still show you the letter he wrote to me: 'I give you my word of honor as an officer and gentleman I will not touch you; I will not take any liberties you won't permit. I will only kiss your eyes, your eyes that have captivated me.' Instead of keeping his word, he made me drunk, so I could

offer him no resistance. After all," she went on, with bitterness, "there are very fine birds among those officers."

"I can't understand you to-day, Olga. Why is it that you speak so disparagingly of the lieutenants? Am I not one of them?"

"Oh, you," she said, tenderly, "in a sense you don't belong to them, you are far too decent. You are a man, but the others are spurious monkeys, and liars and deceivers to boot."

"Olga, I beg of you in all seriousness not to talk in that way. I can't understand what possesses you."

She shrank before the angry look in his eyes. "Don't be harsh with me," she begged, "I will tell you why I think so ill of the officers to-day. You know Lillie?"

George thought for a moment. "Lillie? Yes, your soubrette, certainly I know her. Didn't the three of us take supper together one evening? How is she?"

"How is she? She is sick."

Her words betrayed so much bitterness that he looked at her in astonishment. "You speak in a peculiar way. What ails her?"

Olga was embarrassed. "Oh, I can tell it to you," she said at last. "You know the Freiherr von Gastrow of the Hussars, don't you? He was after Lillie for three months, threw her flowers, made her presents, wrote her letters, in short did everything he could to make conquest of her. You know, also, that Lillie is not so very strict. She likes to enjoy life.

But she would not accept the Hussar because she had been cautioned against him. She had been informed he was diseased—you understand?"

"Certainly—and then?"

"Lillie told the Hussar what she had heard about him, and said that was the reason why she refused to associate with him. The noble Freiherr gave her his word of honor it was all a calumny; he had been diseased once, like any other lieutenant, but was now well and healthy. Thereupon Lillie consented to associate with him. What was the upshot? She is ill; he has infected her. The worst of it is, the Hussar knew full well his own condition. He simply lied in the most contemptible manner in order to get Lillie."

"Is that actually true?"

"Certainly it is. Gastrow himself admitted it to Lillie when she threatened him with a lawsuit. He gave her five thousand marks that she might go to a health resort, and he promised her another five thousand marks next year in case she should then be without an engagement. For the present she cannot appear on the stage. Lillie did not know at first what her trouble was. She had no idea she was diseased, because the Hussar had pledged his word of honor. Now she is in such a condition that the other members of the company refuse to play in the same cast with her."

George listened in silence. He was disgusted at this behavior in a comrade whom he had only recently met at an entertainment where he had paid

such furious court to Fraulein von Reisinger that another comrade offered a wager about their marriage. He had no words to condemn the behavior of the Hussar toward the actress. He was still more indignant that the lieutenant should dare to seek the hand of a young lady, in spite of his condition. Did he really intend to marry her? Was he unscrupulous enough to take a wife in order to free himself from his debts? Did he not consider the awful consequences he would call down upon his wife, perhaps upon his children?

“What do you say, George? Do you take the part of the officers now?”

“My child, heretofore you were always just,” he remonstrated. “You must not jump to hasty conclusions from the actions of an individual and condemn a whole class. In every class there are some who do not act as they ought.”

“True enough,” she assented, “but since we are talking about this horrid matter, let me ask how it is that almost all of us who are diseased owe our ailment to association with officers? We don’t hear or know much about our ballet girls, but we do hear that there are cases of disease among them, and in almost every case some lieutenant is the cause of it.” After a short pause, she added, blushing scarlet: “Do you know, at that time—I mean the first time—I became ill myself?”

George’s fist struck the table with a resounding blow. “That is not true. He could not have been as contemptible as that.”

"But he was! It cannot have been so very bad, for after three months I regained my full health and nothing remained of my disease. So I was told by many physicians. I did not rest contented with the assurance of one only."

George buried his face in his hands. "That men should not be ashamed to act so dishonorably," he groaned. "Such—" he tried in vain to find a word strong enough to characterize the other's action.

Olga drew near and caressed him. "Don't be angry," she begged, "I ought not to have told you. I have always kept silence about it, but somehow to-day, talking about these things, it escaped me. Don't be angry with me."

He kissed her tenderly on the forehead. "Why should I be angry with you? Come, let us forget these unpleasant stories. We can't change the world. We have not met to have our evening spoiled by the faults of other people."

She succeeded in smoothing out the angry lines on his forehead, and they sat talking till the coffee and cigars were served.

"Shall we stay here or go to the sitting-room?" he asked.

"Let's go," she begged. She was fond of the large, beautiful room, with its superb carpets, heavy portières and wonderful pictures. Most of all she liked the large, comfortable leather arm-chairs in front of the chimney. Every time she visited George she intended to ask him to let her sit in one of those chairs after supper. Somehow she had always stopped at

the intention. To-day they had hardly entered the sitting-room when he led her to the large chaise-longue, pushed a cushion under her head, and covered her up with a large polar-bear skin. That was his habit with her. He treated her with so much love and tender regard that she did not have the courage in the face of so much kindness to tell him how uncomfortable she found that position.

“Are you comfortable, darling?”

Even now she lied for his sake. “Simply heavenly.”

He kissed her tenderly, then lighted a cigarette for her, took a cigar himself, and sat down on a chair by her side.

“How charming your quarters are, George; you have no idea how happy I feel with you.”

“Only in my quarters, or with me personally?”

“Only in your quarters,” she teased him; “why should I be pleased with you? You are an old bear, who does not deserve that I should spoil him and be so nice to him. Oh, you dear, stupid fellow, come and give me a kiss. Now be good again, and sit down like a good boy in your chair and tell me what you have been doing during the last few days. What society affairs did you attend, with whom did you dance, to whom did you pay court?”

George told her at length. She showed a genuine interest in everything concerning him. He knew he could trust her absolutely; he knew that in the future, when their intercourse should have come to an end, she would never make use of what he told

her now. So he had no secrets from her. He told her about the regiment, about his parents and his sister, but, strangely enough, not a word about Hildegarde. He had never mentioned that name before her, and kept silent about it to-day. Not that he was afraid Olga might in a way be jealous. She was far too sensible and too intelligent. More than once she had told him how she wished him a lovely bride. A sensation he could not explain to himself prevented him from talking to her about Hildegarde.

Olga listened attentively. Many of the grand people whose names were mentioned she knew from his former explanations. By the questions she interposed, it became plain that she listened with real interest. Naturally she was most concerned to hear details about the gowns worn by the ladies. This question he was always unable to answer.

"How can you be so silly as not to remember that?" she scolded. "The most interesting thing in a woman is what she wears."

"Or what she doesn't wear," he teased. "For instance, in your case, I don't care so much for your long and horrible dresses as I do for your beautiful neck, for your pretty little feet, and so forth."

She gave him a love-tap. "Will you be good! It is not half-past nine yet, and you know well you must always behave until ten o'clock."

"Alas, alas," he murmured.

"You know he who endures will be rewarded."

She looked at him warmly, and he tried to fold her tenderly in his arms. She repulsed him gently.

"Please—not now—later on—let us talk together for a while yet."

She gave him detailed instructions about the material, the cut, and the finishings of women's gowns, so that he might be able to give her more correct information about the dresses of society girls in the future. The lesson, as she called it, was brought to a close by the entrance of a servant.

"A letter has just arrived for the Lieutenant."

"Answer required?"

"The orderly didn't say; he has gone away."

"All right."

The servant left, and George held the letter for a while in his right hand without opening it.

"From whom is it?" Olga inquired.

"I have no idea, but I have a vague notion this letter contains nothing agreeable for me."

"Do you want me to read it for you? If I think the contents would vex you, I could tear up the sheet and never tell you what it contained."

He kissed her hand. "You are a dear, good child, but that won't do. Now, let us see."

He opened the envelope with a paper-knife, spread out the sheet and looked at the signature. A faint, triumphant smile played around his mouth. "Oh, I see, Willberg—after all."

Olga had raised herself a little, and, resting her head upon her right hand, she now looked at him eagerly. "Willberg! what does he want with you? Didn't you tell me of his queer behavior toward you? How does he happen to write to you now?"

Instead of an answer he handed her the letter. Olga read:

“ Very Esteemed Comrade:

“ Though I am still deep in your debt, and though to-day I am less able than I was a few weeks ago to fix the date for the refunding of the amount I owe you, I feel myself constrained to beg again for help, and for quick and immediate help at that. We gambled horribly this afternoon. I am in for it with five milles, four with the Uhlan, with whom I tried to get even for the last encounter. This four mille must be paid by noon to-morrow, or else I am done for. I do not know where to get the money. You are my only salvation. You have offered me your assistance so often that I am sure you will not leave me in the lurch now. It is to be regretted that my orderly cannot wait for an answer. He has to go to my little girl to tell her she need not expect me to-day, for, the Lord knows, I am not in the mood for amorous adventures.

“ Perhaps you will have the goodness to send me the ducats this very evening, either through your servant Fritz, or through your orderly, or through some other male creature. I shall stay at home waiting for your decision, and thank you cordially in advance that you will help me out this time.

“ With best regards, I remain, as always,

“ Your devoted

“ FREIHERR VON WILLBERG.”

Olga folded the sheet and handed it back.

“What do you say to it?”

“I find the letter classic,” she said, “brief, blunt and childishly naïve: ‘I have gambled, please pay my debts.’ The man writes with nonchalance, as if he were inquiring whether you would drink a glass of beer with him. Willberg is simply heavenly.”

“You are not so wrong about it,” said George, whom the tone of the letter offended somewhat. Such a young lieutenant, who can’t call anything in the world his own, except an allowance of a few hundred marks, sits down to the gaming table and gambles away one one-thousand-mark note after the other, with complete trust in the Lord as to the payment of it. When the ready money is gone, and he is in for it, he sits down composedly and writes to his good friends and acquaintances: ‘Please pay my debts.’ When he knows that they cannot come to his assistance, because he has already exhausted their resources, he applies to some rich man whom he has met perhaps once or twice in his life, and borrows of him with an ingenuity and an impertinence which are astonishing. He knows well enough he will get the money somewhere. If things do not go as smoothly as he expected, he becomes dramatic, talks of retiring from the army, of taking off the King’s coat, of courts of honor, bullet through the head and such things. Few remain cold and without feeling in the face of such talk. There is a young, blooming life to be saved, a life that in most cases is not worth the powder and ball. So they go down into their pockets and give to the lieutenant what he

needs to be restored to his position as a man of honor. I don't know, Olga, whether you understand me, but I tell you it is the greatest misfortune for our lieutenants—I do not say for our officers, but for our lieutenants—that they enjoy such large credit on account of their uniform and their position. Many rich people, half-cultivated or not cultivated at all, who wish to associate with officers so that they may consider themselves as belonging to the best society, actually force their help upon the lieutenants who frequent their houses, and make them feel that they can rely upon such assistance in any emergency. The lieutenant makes a note of that. He knows: I contract the debts, somebody else pays them. Our lieutenant, as he is to-day, will not change for the better until his credit is effectually curtailed. He will change only when the world is no longer foolish enough to let every lieutenant borrow as he pleases."

"And when do you think such a day will come?"

"At the same hour when the world ceases to see a supernatural being in every man wearing a uniform."

"That means never."

"I almost believe you are right," he assented, and, growing more serious, he went on: "Do you know, I am sorry for our lieutenants? Actually, there is much good, sound material among them, but they are made half-crazy by artificial methods. Officers are prohibited from contracting debts, as well as from gambling, but nobody cares about these regulations. The prohibitory orders are well known. Yet no civilian

would ever say in a club: 'Herr Lieutenant, I do not wish to insult you, but I know His Majesty has forbidden his officers all gambling; much less would a merchant say to a lieutenant: 'I cannot give you goods on credit; I know you are forbidden to contract debts.' The lieutenant alone is not to blame. The society and business world, which not only makes it possible, but even tempts him to break the rules, is responsible in the last analysis for the fact that our officers are no longer morally and ethically what they were once and what they ought to be still."

Half-serious, half-laughing, he ended: "Did you understand all that, you little, silly human creature?"

"Everything. You are altogether right about it."

"I only wish other people would see it in that way," he said, somewhat amused; "I think if one of the Yellow Butterflies could have overheard my remarks, he would think I was crazy. He would have me up before a court of honor for my rebellious speeches, and I would be asked the question: 'If that's what you think, why did you become an officer yourself?' I might be able to reply: 'The man that takes up a new calling does not know it and cannot know it thoroughly. Only in the course of years did I come to realize what it means to be an officer.' I have my apprenticeship behind me, I have gone through the world with open eyes and open heart, and I must say, if I had known earlier how things are in our corps of officers, had an inkling come to me earlier of the thoughtlessness, the habit of debt-contracting, the dissatisfaction in matters of the service,

the hatred of superiors, of the distress for money and of all the bitterness and misery, I should have thought twice before donning the King's coat."

"If that's so, why do you stay in it?"

George gazed for a while at the smoke from his cigar; then he asked: "Child, do I really not bore you by all this serious talk?"

"Not at all," she retorted, with animation, "I could lie here for hours listening to you."

"That being the case, I will let you have my answer to the question over which I have pondered a good deal, more than anyone would believe. The answer in my case why I don't take off the King's uniform is brief and to the point: from spite!"

"From spite?" she asked in astonishment.

"Certainly. Don't you know how things go in my regiment? I have never made a secret of it to you. If I venture to take off the uniform now, then the Yellow Butterflies would have achieved what they strove for from the first day. They would have pushed me out, they would again be 'among themselves.' The noble company would again be undefiled. I begrudge them such a triumph, because it would mean a great defeat for me. I am not seeking advance at any price, but I have my own ambition, my own sense of honor, and I am determined to see it through in trying to create a position for myself among them. Often have I yearned for a chance, for an opportunity, to distinguish myself in some way, to do something extraordinary; but it was in vain. So I must endeavor to create a position for myself by conscientious per-

formance of duty, by industry and reliability. To you I can own it. Do you believe I like the kind of life I am leading here? I am young, I am rich, I have no talent to be a spendthrift, still I should like to enjoy my youth more than I do. I should like to live better, to have carriages and horses, a large retinue of servants, to make fine journeys, and things like that. I must not do it. If the aide-de-camp of our regiment, Count Wettborn, did it, all the regiment would be proud of their count, who understood how to represent them brilliantly. They would show the world their pride that he had the means to live according to his station. To the nobility it would not be grudged, with me it would be an offence. If I lived that way, there would be one word only to cover my case: *Snob*. A snob would not be endured long; there is no place for him in a regiment where the other men allegedly get along with modest means, but are, in fact, head over heels in debt. My so-called snobbery would offer a welcome cause for my transfer. That is precisely what I don't want. I don't believe myself that my life as lieutenant will last, but if I ever do go, then I want to be able to tell myself and the world the reason for my going. I want to stand there, large and imposing, while the others should be shamed, if they are capable of the sensation of shame."

She saw the wrinkles on his brow, and could not help noticing his agitation. "George," she begged, softly, "come to me, let me kiss you, and don't get worked up."

“Darling, it is easy for you to say: ‘Don’t get vexed!’ This day seems to be predestined to bring to light a lot of things heretofore kept dark, so I may as well own to you that I suffer terribly under these conditions, because I am conscious of no other ill than my ‘Buergerlicher’ descent. If the gentlemen of the nobility were free from wrong and misdeeds; if they were above reproach both in the service and out of it; if our noble officers were, in fact, what they ought to be: the incarnation of all honor and knightliness; if they were possessed not only of nobility of birth, but also of intellect and sentiment, I would not hesitate for a single moment to own openly and frankly: ‘I feel that I am not welcome among you. I do not comprehend your exclusiveness from a modern, enlightened standpoint, but I honor it, and I will no longer be a burden to you.’ For myself I can only judge of what I have seen, and I must say that those noble officers are not a whit better regarding their mode of life and their pleasure in service than their ‘Buergerlicher’ comrades, upon whom they look with contempt. Look how the nobility is favored! What would inevitably break a ‘Buergerlicher’ the nobleman may do with impunity. The sentiment prevails that the outside world, more or less permeated with social democratic ideas, must not be treated to the spectacle of a nobleman on trial. The mass of the people must not be able to say: The nobles after all are only human. In the highest quarters nobility is favored in an unheard-of manner; not because of its special efficiency, but because it is something apart,

according to the old nursery tale. You can no more struggle against that than you can against stupidity. It revolts me and almost turns me into a social democrat in spite of the coat on my back. Don't I experience in my own case how the 'Buergerlicher' is considered more and more as a being whose only cause for existence consists in forming the dark background against which the nobility stands out in dazzling relief?"

"But, George!" Olga exclaimed, quite frightened, "I don't know you any more; never before did you speak with so much bitterness."

"I am not embittered even now. What I have told you is not the inspiration of a moment, but the result of much thought, of ripe and keen observation. But let us leave those serious matters. I only want to send the money to the noble Willberg. After that, my darling, I belong entirely to you, and will again learn in your arms that life is beautiful, in spite of everything."

He had risen and started to go to his desk, when Olga stopped him. "Will you do me a favor, George? You know I never make requests of you, but this time I am going to ask for a very, very great favor. Will you grant it?"

"If I can, certainly. Why not, when I am so fond of you?"

"I love you, too, and because of it I ask you to pledge me your word that you will fulfil my wish."

"Darling, how can I do that? A word of honor should not be pledged lightly. Even without it, you

know very well that I do for you whatever I can. What is it?"

She had straightened herself from her reclining position, and looked at him beseechingly with her large eyes. She was pale with agitation and her voice trembled, as she said: "Do me the favor not to give the money to Willberg."

He looked at her, astonished. "Why not? I have the money handy, and even if I didn't, I should have to get it. I have offered Willberg my help time and again, now I must help him. Aside from that, it is a great satisfaction to me, and you ought to feel the sensation with me, that he has to turn to me again for assistance. Why should you wish to spoil that pleasure?"

He started again toward his desk, and she again stopped him. "George, give your money to whomsoever you like; do with it as you please, that is not my business. But you must not help Willberg, understand me, you must not, not *you*."

The tone of her words was so grim, betokened so much resolution, that he drew near and seized her hand. He saw how she trembled, and great agitation took hold of him. "Olga, you hide something from me; you have reasons which you keep from me. But I must know all. If you ask me not to help Willberg, if you tell me that I must help him under no circumstances, then you must also tell me the reason why."

She looked at him with an expression of infinite love. "Don't ask me, don't torment me, I cannot tell you."

"If I insist on it, if I must insist on it?" He had grown pale, and held her hand with an iron grip. "I must know it, do you understand? It is not right to utter a half-accusation; one should always have the courage of the whole truth. I have always considered you a decent, honest, true girl. Don't let me lose faith in you now."

She faced him, a hot conflict raging within her; her eyes were cast to the ground, her whole body trembled and vibrated, betraying her agitation. Now she raised her eyes and looked at him candidly. "Let it be so, you shall know all, but on one condition only."

"What is it?"

"That you give me your word of honor never to mention to Willberg a syllable of what I am going to tell you. You can do that."

He looked at her inquiringly. "Can I do it honestly?"

She sustained his gaze. "You can. But for all that, if you should be able to prove to me the impossibility of keeping your word, I shall release you after a week, no sooner and no later. Until then you must think calmly about what I shall tell you." After a pause, she asked, with halting voice: "Do you still insist that I must tell you all, even if we may have to part in consequence, even if we can no longer remain friends?"

A dark misgiving rose within him. "You have associated with Willberg?" he asked, agitated. But, calming himself, he went on: "How could I blame

you for that? At that time you could not know we should ever meet. It is well known of Willberg that he is after every young girl, that he uses every means to achieve her conquest."

She gnashed her teeth in rage. "I know it only too well. I have always told you that the scoundrel who betrayed me had since taken his own life. That is not true. He lives, and his name is Willberg."

George reeled as if a blow had struck him. He sprang toward Olga and seized her by the shoulders.

"Tell me it is not true—it cannot be true."

She freed herself from his hands. "Come, George, be sensible. What has happened cannot be undone."

He sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands. "Such a dog!"

Springing up suddenly, he asked: "Tell me the truth on your oath. Do you still associate with him, or does he know that we associate together?"

"I am faithful to you," she answered, calmly, and he heard in the tone of her voice that she spoke the truth. "Since that fatal night I have seen Willberg but once."

"And when was that?"

"On the way when I was with you for the first time. It was then I received a letter from him telling me he must speak to me in my own interest. At first I did not mean to reply; but as I read his lines over again, I became convinced they concerned a serious matter. So I named an hour when I would be at home for him, and he came."

"Well, and what then?" George insisted, when

she kept silent for a moment. "What did the honorable gentleman want of you?"

"He said he had observed both of us on the previous evening. He had followed us on the sly; he knew I had gone with you to your quarters; he therefore concluded, not without reason, that we two were associating together. I had no reason to deny my acquaintance with you; I could not have done it in the face of the facts he had observed. When I admitted to him openly that you were my friend, he besought me never to mention his name in your presence. I should not have done it any way. I had resolved within myself to keep his name from you; yet I seemed astonished, and asked him what prompted his request."

"And what was his answer?"

"He said he had to admit openly that he had not acted quite correctly toward me that night."

"Not quite correctly is splendid!" George laughed, in derision.

"Finally he confessed it had been very wrong of him to have made me his helpless victim, but that my beauty had confused his senses, robbed him of every sense, of every power of calm thought. He said also it should have been his duty to care for me afterward, but he was ashamed of himself, because at that time he was diseased. His conscience had smitten him so in regard to me, he did not dare to face me again. Aside from that, he had been then in a very bad condition financially, and in no wise able to do anything for me. Therefore, he would offer me now one thousand marks as an indemnity for

the wrong done to me, as a kind of hush-money for the future."

"And did you take the money?"

"Before his eyes I threw it into the fire and enjoyed the expression of his stupefied face. Then he returned to the object of his call. He begged of me never to tell you anything about the way he had acted toward me. He and you were now comrades in the regiment, and I ought not to cloud the friendship existing between you. You might not find his demeanor quite correct, it might come to an explanation between you. Such a thing was always disagreeable, particularly in such a swell regiment, which was bound to preserve its position toward the world outside. The two of you could not well shoot at each other for my sake. In short, I don't remember all he said; I listened without replying. The longer I kept silent, the more he grew small and meek, until at last he stood before me like a guilty rogue. Finally he went down on his knees, asking for my silence and forgiveness. Then only did I promise him never to mention his name to you. Now I have done it, I had to do it. It is not my fault, but yours, that I did. I have spoken for your sake, too, because I did not want to lose you on his account." Of a sudden she was seized by anxiety lest he might now loathe and disown her. She fell on her knees before him. "George, tell me that you still love me, that you won't send me away—it wasn't my fault."

He bent over her and kissed her forehead.

"Get up, my darling; how could I be angry with

you? How could I let you suffer for what a scoundrel did to you? How can it be your fault that the name of that scoundrel is Willberg? But he, he shall suffer for what he has done to you."

"He shall not, George!" Olga exclaimed. "You gave me your word not to mention anything to him, and you will keep that pledge. I don't believe there is any occasion why I should release you from it."

He had sunk into a chair in a brown study. Was there the least reason why he should proceed against Willberg in any way? He could tell him: "I have become acquainted with a young girl and know now that you have acted toward her like a scamp." Willberg could not pocket such a reproach quietly, there would be at least a quarrel, possibly a duel, and in connection therewith an investigation by a court of honor. There would be a great stirring up of mud. What was the use? Willberg would probably be dismissed from the army. What then? What good would that do, and whom would it benefit? The army would be less one gentleman without honor, certainly, but who would have to bear the consequences? George alone, for he would never be forgiven because he had proceeded so harshly against the regiment's favorite. After his dismissal, Willberg would still have friends enough to stand by him. He would not suffer much from the fact that he no longer wore the King's coat. No, George would not proceed against him. There was not the right occasion for it, he admitted to himself. To him personally Willberg had offered no offence, no insult. If he

posed as the champion of Olga's honor, everybody would shake their heads, the council of honor and the commander would try to make it clear to him that one does not fight duels for a young lady like Olga. She might be a very excellent, amiable young girl; she might be a talented actress, but still—in his imagination he heard it all, and clenched his fists in impotent rage. There was something else. What would his parents, what would Hildegarde say, if they learned he had fought a duel for his mistress? No, they must not know anything about Olga.

For fully five minutes George sat in deep thought, and Olga hung anxiously on his features. Her reputation, her position, were at stake. What had happened between her and Willberg only the two of them and George knew. She had never told anybody else about it, never mentioned the name of her betrayer. If George believed he could not let the matter rest there, that he must report it to the court of honor, then she was obliged to release him from his pledge. The whole city would know within a few days what had been a secret until to-day. Then she could not stay here any longer, she felt that she could never again face an audience that knew how she had been treated and what the consequences of that night were for her.

"Well, George," she asked at last, "have you made up your mind as to what you are going to do?"

"Yes," he replied, with a firm voice. "The scoundrel deserves I should slap his face. But I shall not do it. I shall remain silent, even to himself,

though that comes very hard on me. Yet it must be so, for your own sake, for I am too fond of you to expose you to public gossip, maybe even to general contempt. The world would have to change suddenly, tremendously, if it were not going to condemn you. As I said, I do not want that. So it is settled." She put her arms around his neck caressingly.

"I thank you, George."

He led her back to the chaiselongue and sat down by her side. "Lord, what a mess! One more thing I should like to know. Do you happen to know the day, I mean the exact date, when that—that person came to you to beg for your silence?"

"Why shouldn't I?" she tried to jest in order to bring back his serenity, "you know it too, for I told you it was the day when I was with you for the first time. You cannot have forgotten the date!"

He passed his hand across his forehead. "Don't take it amiss, Olga, but my head is so topsy-turvy just now I cannot remember it."

She took from her finger a diamond ring which he had given her in memory of their first meeting. The date was engraved in it. She handed it to him.

"Oh, yes, that's right," he said. "How could I forget it?" Suddenly he sank into deep thought until at last he started.

"What's the matter now?" she asked.

"Nothing, nothing," he calmed her; "I just remembered that when Willberg came to me the first time to borrow money he already knew that we associated together. He had been to pay you that call and

still had the courage to come to me. Now I understand it, all becomes clear to me. I understand why he begged so for discretion; why I had to pledge my word to keep silent to everybody. He was afraid I might perhaps tell you something about it, and then all that happened between the two of you might come to light. That's what it was!"

He went up and down the room with long strides, occupied with his own thoughts.

"George," Olga begged, "do me a favor and write immediately to Willberg that you cannot give him the money. Then don't think any more about the wretched story!"

George stopped. "You are right, Willberg is waiting for an answer. I forgot, I have to preserve the form of civility even if I find it hard to do so."

He rapidly wrote a few lines regretting that he was unable at the moment to place the desired thousands at his comrade's disposal. He sent the note through his servant.

"Now come to me," she begged. With one rapid motion, she loosened the heavy jet-black hair which fell like a mantle upon her shoulders and down to her waist. He buried his face in it and breathed the precious aroma which always intoxicated him anew. She passed her hand tenderly over his hair.

"You are kind and good, Olga, but the others, those——"

"Don't excite yourself anew," she begged, "don't think of them."

He had freed himself, and now straightened up.

“Not think of them, who could do that! Something else disquiets me; who knows whether I shall possess enough energy and self-command to face Willberg to-morrow, and to act as if I knew nothing about his villainies.”

“Can’t you keep out of his way? As far as I know, he belongs to another company, even to another battalion.”

“That’s so, but I shall have to see him in the regimental home, and even if I should not go there to-morrow, I should have to see him the day following, because we cannot stay away from mess for more than twenty-four hours without satisfactory excuse. I am afraid my blood will not have calmed by the day after to-morrow.”

Olga considered for a moment, then she asked: “Couldn’t you go on furlough? I shall find it hard not to see you for two weeks, but the trip would do you good; you would amuse yourself and distract your mind. I suppose it would be easy for you to get off.”

“Quite correct,” he said. “At present there is not much to do, and the furlough could not be denied me. But where could I go? To my parents? I should not like to see them. I could not be gay and serene. They would notice that something oppressed me, and so my coming would disturb them instead of giving them pleasure.”

“I have it!” Olga exclaimed. “You said a while ago that you should like to enjoy life for once. Go for two weeks to Paris, to Monte Carlo, or some other

fine place. If you see beautiful women, give them my regards and tell them to be good and kind to you, that I was not jealous." She added, with a roguish smile: "For you won't remain faithful to me any way."

"Yes, I will," he said with a firm voice.

"Oh, oh," she laughed, "I wouldn't put my hand into the fire on that."

"But I would, for I shall have no occasion to be unfaithful to you."

She looked at him in surprise. "How so, for what reason?"

"For the simplest reason in the world. You will accompany me."

"George!" Laughing and crying for joy, she hung on his neck. "You are going to take me along? I shall see Paris, or some other beautiful city? You are too kind and good," and she kissed him again and again. All of a sudden she grew quiet.

"What is the matter now?"

"I cannot come along after all."

"But why not?"

"For one thing, you must not conceive the idea that I persuaded you to make the trip in order to benefit from it myself; and then I don't know whether I can get leave."

"What you said first is nonsense," he said. "Perhaps I don't extend a favor to you by taking you along, but you will give me a great pleasure by accompanying me. Nothing is more horrible, at least to me, than to travel alone through the world, to sit

alone in a compartment, to eat my meals alone, to hurry alone through galleries and museums, and to have nobody to talk to. And as for your leave, you will get it, you are not so busy just now."

"But yet—the repertoire may be changed any day."

"My dear child," he calmed her, "your manager won't be an ogre. To-morrow morning you ask him for leave, and if he interposes difficulties, you tell him you are ready to pay him two or three thousand marks as indemnity for the services you will withhold for the next two weeks. You will find on that basis he will give you leave for as long a period as you desire."

She seized his hand and kissed it gratefully. "How kind and good you are. You are willing to spend so much money to make me free? Now listen, I am going to offer him first five hundred marks, then another five hundred, and so on; but more than two thousand I shall not give him any way."

He laughed in amusement. "You may arrange that as you like. I shall give you the money, and whatever you save of the amount belongs to you."

She clapped her hands with pleasure. "I shall buy an elegant travelling costume with it."

"You may leave that, darling," he begged. "What dresses you need, I shall buy for you at Paris. During all the years I have been lieutenant, I have never spent half my allowance, but invested it with interest and compound interest. Now I can afford to spend a pile of money without the least compunction."

"Are we really going to Paris?" she asked, her eyes beaming with delight.

"If there is no hitch, we shall go to-morrow evening. We take my servant along, upon whose discretion I can rely. You take the train at the north depot, I on the south side. I shall have the train investigated as to whether there are any acquaintances. If need be, I shall have a whole compartment reserved for the two of us. Later on, if anybody sees us together, what does it matter? Who knows us in Paris?"

"Have you been there before?"

"Certainly."

He told her of that city of pleasure and beauty, and she, tenderly nestling to his side, listened to his description of the splendor she was going to enjoy with him.

VII.

Hildegarde's father celebrated his sixtieth birthday. The old major had expressed the wish to have both his children with him on that day. Fritz used this welcome occasion to ask the Warnows for ample means to defray the expense of the trip. It would not do for him to travel except first-class. He would have to take his orderly along, and he would have to buy a decent present for the old man's birthday. Captain von Warnow felt obliged to produce another thousand-mark note. The first thing Fritz did with the means thus at his disposal, was to try his luck at the gaming table, with the fortunate result that he won from the proprietor of a landed estate in the neighborhood four thousand marks cash. Such a stroke of luck rarely came his way. He beamed with delight, and found life a little more bearable than before.

Hildegarde at first did not wish to go. She felt offended by her father's letter, saying: "My dear child, I should be immensely pleased to have you with me, but my personal wishes must not be considered when more important things are at stake for you. If you can't get away conveniently, or if you find it impracticable to leave for a few days, I advise you to stay where you are and to strike while the iron is hot."

She did not wish to go, because she could foresee how things would be at home; but her aunt finally

persuaded her. Winkler was on furlough, it was said he had gone to Monte Carlo and the Riviera. He would not be back for a week, great festivities were not expected in the near future, and without Winkler, it would be no use for her to attend such affairs. It would only cause useless expense for her toilette. To throw money out of the window for the other men who had no intentions in regard to Hildegarde, would not pay. Another thing induced Frau von Warnow to urge Hildegarde to make the trip. She desired to be alone again with her husband, to have a week when she could think and worry about other matters than Hildegarde's engagement. So she thanked heaven for the coincidence of Winkler's and Hildegarde's trip. In a week both would be back, and it was to be hoped the affair would then come to a happy termination. She felt quite assured that Winkler was seriously interested in Hildegarde. When George had taken leave of her husband he had asked him particularly to convey his regards to Frau von Warnow and the Baroness. This was very irregular, but for that reason Frau von Warnow considered it a good sign.

Hildegarde left on the morning train. Her parents received her at the station. Fritz was expected within an hour. They all stayed at the station, until he should arrive, going to take some lunch, because Hildegarde was tired and hungry after her long and tedious trip.

The waiter hurried toward them, and the proprietor himself appeared to inquire for the orders of such

grand people. The major by virtue of his rank and his quality as baron, belonged to the prominent people in town. In this place he was the only real baron. There were a few "Vons," more or less old. So he played the first part, though everybody was exactly informed as to his financial condition.

He was a type of the pensioned officer, of medium size, vigorous, with a red face and a mighty mustache. His wife was still of fine appearance and showed traces that in her youth she had been a celebrated beauty. They talked about petty matters until the meal was served. Hildegarde saw only too plainly the impatience of her parents to learn something about her coming engagement. She endeavored to avoid conversation on this topic, but failed. The waiter had hardly served them and received orders not to come again unless he was called, when both pushed their chairs nearer to Hildegarde. "Now, child, tell us. Relieve our minds; how is the affair?"

Hildegarde answered evasively. What could she say? It might be possible that some day when both had become better acquainted with one another, George might propose to her—that was the only thing she would have been able to reply. But she read in her parents' faces so much anxiety and yet so much hope, that she did not have the heart to spoil this pleasure. She had a saving inspiration. She told briefly of George, and then spoke at length of another rich gentleman who had lately paid most pressing court to her.

"But, child, aunt has not written me a word about

that, though she usually keeps me well informed about everything."

Hildegarde felt embarrassed. She said: "Mamma, I should not like you to write aunt about this. Strangely enough, she has not noticed in the least the other's courtship, neither have I told her. You know how aunt is. She is well disposed toward me, perhaps only too well. In her desire to help me, she might go a little too far and spoil it."

"What's his name, what is he?" the mother inquired.

Hildegarde blushed. "Please don't ask me, I should not like to talk about it until the matter has matured."

"Quite right, child," the major said approvingly, "one should not talk about business until everything is settled." Turning to his wife, he went on: "Don't urge Hildegarde; if she does not wish to speak now, she certainly has her reasons for it." He shook hands with his daughter. "I thank you, Hilda, for giving me this pleasure in celebration of to-morrow: two suitors in place of one. At last something definite will come of it," and with a heavy sigh he added: "It is high time, I could not hold out much longer."

The mother also groaned and said with a low voice: "Hilda, you have no idea of the hard times we endured while you were at the capital. Just think, the tax officials were going to have an execution against us. Papa had no end of trouble to secure a reprieve."

"Yes, it was a hard piece of work, and if I had not been able to throw my respectable name into the

balance, the fellows would have put their official seal on my last piece of furniture. Those people know no pity."

"At least not usually," Hildegarde interposed.

"They are entirely right about it," the Major assented, "the State cannot live without taxes. If it would grant reprieve to every laborer or merchant who is behind with his taxes, where should we come to? We should soon be in a tight place and have no money for the soldiers, for pensions and for other important things. The State must be relentless. If it makes an exception with us, it is because it knows it can afford it well. A nobleman will always discharge his obligations toward the State and his fellowmen in the end."

Hildegarde did not dare to contradict. She could not have done it without charging her father with falsehood.

The major had emptied his glass of beer. "This is really a miserable morning beverage. It makes one tired and spoils the appetite. Don't you think we might have a small bottle of champagne to celebrate our reunion?"

The major's wife showed very little desire to do so. She grudged the expense. Yet she knew it was no use to object. Possibly it might raise their credit a little if the proprietor told how they had drank champagne, paying cash for it. So she consented. "Well, for my part I consent, but please order French champagne."

"That goes without saying," observed the major. "Do you think I should celebrate the good news

Hildegarde brings us with miserable German sparkling wine? Not much!" He called the waiter.

Hildegarde felt tempted to say to her parents: "Save the money, you have no occasion to rejoice. What I told you was a white lie." But she remained silent. Why aggravate her parents? Perhaps a miracle might happen somehow and bring everything to a happy ending.

"You better bring a quart bottle Pommery," the major said, "my son will be here soon, he also will be thirsty, so it is not worth while to begin with a pint."

The wine was served, the glasses were touched, and Hildegarde was urged to give her story. "Not here," she begged, "there is no more uncongenial place than a waiting-room, particularly in a small town."

"Fancy, child, fancy," her father corrected her. "When I was still a young lieutenant garrisoned in the miserable spot which Satan may some day wipe from the face of the earth, we were extremely glad when the railroad was finished and we had a depot. Day after day we would walk to the station, enter the waiting room and feel there as easy and comfortable as nowhere else. If the road had not come at last, if we could not have gone daily to the station, I believe we could not have supported life in the long run, but should have become deranged. Before that when our day's work was done, the question would confront us: when and how are you going to bed, early and sober, or late and tipsy? Now our life had a higher aim, we must see the trains come

and go. We did that more conscientiously than we performed our regular service. Think of the fun, if some one among us espied an acquaintance in the train. He was taken willy nilly from his compartment, if need be even by force. When we had captured such a guest with a good deal of ingenuity, we did not let go of him easily. He was placed under military supervision, as it were, so that he could not escape us. Our guest enjoyed full liberty, he could do what he pleased, provided he did not go to the depot. When at last he had to go away, after proving clearly to us that he could stay no longer, he was obliged to buy himself free with a giant 'bowle.' Ha, ha, ha! We were regular highwaymen, but good Lord, what could we do in such a stupid place?"

The major loved to tell of the life in the small garrison, where apparently he had felt quite at ease, in spite of all his cursing and scolding. Talking about the time when he was a young lieutenant, he more than once would interweave his tales with the words: "Children, we played pranks then, pranks,—" and he would half close his merry eyes in memory of the gay hours when wine, women and dice played the main rôle in his existence. Possibly the life in the small garrison was a beautiful memory to him solely, because he considered it as a kind of episode. Immediately after his engagement he had been transferred to the capital where he played a great rôle, because he was an amiable man and a good officer, and his wife attended all of the Queen's entertain-

ments. A great career was prophesied for him. But one day during an inspection he was severely criticized. The sneering tone in which the general, in the presence of all officers, judged his achievements made his blood boil, and he so far forgot himself as to tell his superior before all the lieutenants that his excellency was likewise only human and might therefore err; that he did not consider his excellency's view as absolutely decisive. That was more than insubordination, and the major had to thank his stars to get off with discharge without being punished. He had to go; but a little later the general also was discharged because in high quarters the manner of his criticism was not considered quite correct. When the major told of his term as lieutenant, he would go on talking about one thing and the other, and though his ladies already knew the stories, they would listen to him with loving attention. There was nothing for him to do in the wide world now but to tell of the things he had gone through as an officer, in gay and in hard times. When he was drinking champagne as he did now, the past appeared to him in a golden hue. When he was at home with his financial worries, he couldn't find anything good in the whole army system.

At last the train that was to bring Fritz was signalled.

The major looked into the bottle. It was empty. He turned to the waiter to order a new one, but the ladies objected: "Let us drive home, where it is more congenial. We have to dress before dinner,"

Reluctantly, the major at last consented. "I'll pay the bill!" He put his hand into his pocket. "Lord, I forgot to put the hundred-mark note in my pocket, and now I haven't got enough money with me."

"Pray, that doesn't matter, Herr Major," the waiter said, "the Herr Major will pay the next time."

Hildegarde blushed, she was deeply ashamed for her father. She knew this trick only too well. She had witnessed times innumerable how her father had forgotten the hundred-mark not which usually he did not possess at all. How was it possible it had escaped her for the moment? Under no circumstances must her father owe the breakfast in which she had taken part. So she opened her pocket-book: "I have change, Father, how much do you need?" Without waiting for his answer she pushed two gold pieces toward the waiter.

"Yes, that's better, Hilda, please remind me so that I refund you the money when we get home."

The waiter offered the change, but Hildegarde motioned to him: "It is all right, keep the change for yourself."

They arose and went out to the platform. "Hildegarde, how could you be foolish enough to pay!" the major scolded. "To-morrow they'll tell through the whole town that you brought money, and when I celebrate my birthday, they will attack me from all quarters for payment of their bills. One must either pay cash down for everything, or have everything charged. The former I cannot do, so I have everything charged

in order to pay off the lot in one stroke." Hildegarde was indignant over this view. "What do you think about it, mother?"

The Frau Baronin shrugged her shoulders. "I should like it much better, if we could pay cash for everything, but since we can't we choose the other way. The people know that their money is sure." Drawing Hildegarde a little aside, she inquired with a subdued voice: "Do tell me, for I am greatly troubled, and wonder that Papa has made no inquiry about it; yet, what will the Warnows give him for his birthday?"

"Uncle gave me a check payable at the local branch of the Imperial Bank, for six thousand marks."

"Not more?"

"Mamma!"

Hildegarde found no words. She had been more than ashamed over her uncle's great kindness. She had counted up for herself all he had spent in the course of years for Fritz, for her parents and for herself. True, he was rich and did not spend all his income in spite of his brilliant establishment, and in spite of what he gave away. Yet his kindness had touched her and made her feel ashamed, so that she had hesitated long before accepting the money.

In deep thought the mother had walked by her daughter's side, while the father talked with a railroad official as to why the track was not free yet. Now she spoke: "I believe he will be disappointed. As far as I know, he has been counting on at least ten thousand marks. After all, six thousand is a good

deal of money, if nobody hears anything about it. Else it will all be taken away from us forthwith."

The arrival of the train put an end to the conversation. A moment later Fritz hurried toward his parents and his sister. He was attired in faultless civilian dress, yet his bearing plainly indicated the officer.

"Morning, Mamma; morning, Papa; morning, Hilda; it's nice that the four of us are together again for once. Let us have a fine celebration for a few days." He looked around for his orderly. "Where is the clown? The devil knows, those fellows get more stupid every day. There he comes."

The orderly appeared, and Fritz handed him his baggage certificate. "If you rhinoceros believe that I took you along for your private pleasure, you are mistaken. You are here for me. If you loaf around and don't attend to your d—— duty, I'll have you locked up for a few days and get another in your place, do you understand? Hurry up, get the baggage into the carriage."

"At your service, Herr Lieutenant!" The orderly trotted away to carry out his orders.

Hildegarde noticed how the soldier's face flushed at the way in which his lieutenant treated him in the presence of the ladies and of the other travellers. She said to her brother: "Don't be so cross with your orderly; he surely looked forward to this trip with some pleasure. You should not spoil it for him."

"It is all the same to me whether the fellow enjoys himself or not," Fritz snarled at his sister; "the

main thing is that I should have my own comfort. Aside from that, I beg of you not to prescribe to me how to treat my men. Don't bother about things that are none of your business. Rather tell me what is the condition of your fortune. Will it be soon time to congratulate, eh?"

They had seated themselves in the carriage. The luggage had been stowed in the vehicle, the orderly was enthroned upon the trunks, and they drove toward the villa inhabited by the major.

Hildegarde did not answer. Fritz was about to repeat his question when he read in his mother's eyes the request not to insist further with Hildegarde, since everything went well. He felt relieved.

After a brief journey they arrived at the house, and later on met at table. The major beamed with pleasure at having both his children with him. In celebration of to-day and in anticipation of to-morrow they had the best of food and the best of wines. Later on when the coffee and the cigars were served, they remained together for a long time. Brother and sister had to tell their story, the one from the capital, the other from his provincial garrison.

Though the major loved his beautiful daughter, yet Fritz was his spoiled favorite. Everything he did was good, everything he said was unquestionable. Hildegarde, on the other hand, found her brother had grown more intolerable since she saw him last. He was possessed of an incredible superciliousness, the type of a young officer who has nothing, is nothing, and yet fancies himself to be a higher being because

of his coat. His demeanor was as affected as his exterior; the ends of the mustache proudly pointing upward, the hair parted down the back of his head, the monocle which he did not take from his eye for a moment, the civilian suit cut in an ultra-fashionable pattern. He was not exactly homely. He looked well with his supple and elegant figure, his face not intellectual, and not very expressive, but blooming and open.

Naturally he told of his horses, his service, and his comrades, and Hildegarde finally was so bored that she rose under the pretext that she needed rest. The mother also rose after having arranged with her daughter for a few calls to be made during the afternoon. When father and son were alone, it was: "Well, don't we drink another bottle?"

"Of course!"

The wine was served, and for a little while they dwelt on the old subject of conversation; then they talked of Hildegarde.

"The girl still looks fine," Fritz said. "You really think something will materialize this time?"

The major saw everything to-day in a rosy hue. "Certainly, positively. Hildegarde has even two on her hook, one will bite under all circumstances."

Fritz groaned aloud: "May the Lord grant it!"

"Yes, may the Lord grant it," his father assented. "Now we see salvation clearly ahead of us; you need no longer have any secret from me. Besides, you know that I could not pay your debts. I told you so at the time you became an officer. This is what I

told you: Contract as many debts as you like, but you must look out yourself how you pay them. Now confess, how deep are you in debt?" For a moment Fritz was somewhat embarrassed.

"Do you really want to know?"

"Why not? Since I pay nothing, you may rest assured that I will not offer any reproaches."

Fritz lighted a new cigar. "All told, it will be about forty thousand marks."

"And how long have you been a lieutenant?"

"Seven years."

"That makes annually six thousand marks, in round figures. It isn't exactly a trifle."

Fritz shrugged his shoulders. "What can I do? Life is expensive. One is not born into the world only to attend one's service. With the allowance you made me, I cannot get along, of course."

"Somebody else might—not you."

"I believe nobody else would, at least not in my regiment. They are all in debt, some more, some less. Seventy-five per cent. of the lieutenants confess from time to time to their parents and relatives, and then a few thousand marks are raised, always for the last time, to get the young gentlemen afloat again. If you multiply by seven the amount of debts paid off by the others annually you get a pretty sum. In my case things have accumulated little by little, and meanwhile never a cent has been paid off. If one is in it as deep as I am, higher interest is charged than to a fellow who has still a clean sheet. The last time I wrote my signature for three thousand marks, all

my wiles and artifices would not procure for me more than one thousand."

"Well, that's at least something," the major laughed.

Involuntarily Fritz joined the laughter. Then he grew serious and inquired: "How are things with you, papa?"

The major smoked furiously. "Don't ask me, my son; miserable."

The old gentleman looked so downcast that Fritz felt genuine pity. "Poor father, they will go better in the near future."

"Certainly, but you may believe that, though I am a man of liberal ideas, it seems horrible to me to have to accept money from my son-in-law, not only to pay my debts, but to be able to live at all."

Fritz looked astonished. "I don't understand you."

"You're a young lieutenant, single. You have to care for nobody but yourself. Now look at me; I am a man of sixty. I have been pensioned for more than ten years. When a boy of eight I became a cadet. I have worn the uniform for more than forty years. During that time I drilled recruits after learning to drill myself; I did my duty on the drill ground and elsewhere and took part in three campaigns. What is the result? I left the army on a pension on which a man with a family cannot live. Pushed aside with four thousand marks a year! Pray, what are four thousand marks nowadays? They say things will be improved, pensions will be

increased—well, let us assume that we get an increase of fifteen hundred marks per annum. It won't be more than that anyway, if we get as much. What then? Would even six thousand marks suffice to defray the living expenses of a family? Perhaps in a little town and with very modest living. Is it for that one has grown gray, has exposed his bones for decades in peace, has braved danger in three campaigns? In old age must one suffer restriction after restriction in order to be able to live at all? There is a saying, 'If you have been used to cake in your youth, you won't find it easy to eat rye-bread in your old age.' We pensioned officers mostly ate cake in our youth. Of course, there are honorable exceptions who got along with their allowance, who lived economically and modestly; but the majority plunged into life and enjoyed everything it contained. Think how we were feted, from one festival to the other, from one dinner to the other. The choicest bits were placed before us, we were overwhelmed with attentions, we were courted and flattered in every way. Think how well we lived at the Casino. We ordered whatever we wanted, and if we didn't have ready money we had it charged. Then, after such a gay youth, follows a dreary old age. The worst is not the enforced idleness. At least there is rest from drudgery. Two things make our life intolerable: financial worry and the position we occupy. What are we now? Absolutely nothing. The youngest and most stupid lieutenant plays a far more important rôle. We are done for. Nobody notices us; we are

either ridiculous or at best to be pitied. Most people can't understand what business we have to remain alive. Having done our duty for decades, we may retire to some miserable hole, either to be bored or to starve to death. You have no idea, my son, how things are in the families of pensioned officers living with us in this town. It is the same in each Pensionopolis. There is a wailing and gnashing of teeth, of which only the initiated have any idea. How few find an opportunity to add to their income. The pensioned officer is treated with a suspicion that is not without good cause. If he applies for a position, or if he is active as agent or wine-salesman, how much can he earn? Only in the rarest instances does it amount to anything. It's misery, a dog's misery. Fill my glass, my son, pour out the wine. Let us gild the gray day, yes, let us gild it!"

Father and son touched their glasses and emptied them with one draught. Fritz spoke: "Father, you may be right in what you say; but how can it be changed? It always was so. It always will remain so."

"Certainly; at least as long as the officer plays in society the rôle he plays to-day."

Fritz looked up, astonished. "Do you, as an old officer, wish to have it otherwise?"

"In some respects, yes. Nothing is farther from me than the wish that the officers as a class should lose any of their standing. In my judgment, they should remain in the estimation of the public what they are to-day: first-class men. That is necessary if

our army is to continue as it is. It is true things are not altogether as they should be; the eternal inspections, the fear of dismissal, the struggle for individual existence, will not admit of the uninterrupted warlike education of our troops. But that is another story." He turned to his son: "Fill my glass again; this long talk makes me thirsty." He emptied it at a draught and went on: "Wherefore, my son, the first-class men should continue to be Caste One, but in order to do so they should flock by themselves more than they do now. There is always talk about the caste spirit among the officers. True, it is shown on solemn occasions, when unwelcome elements are to be kept out of the officers' corps, or when somebody stabs a civilian with his sword, or when an officer shoots a comrade or somebody else in a duel. If on such occasions the other classes raise a howl, the answer is: 'We are Caste One! We have our own standard of honor. You do not comprehend us. Our thoughts are not your thoughts, and your thoughts, praise the Lord, are not ours.' How is it with Caste One in other respects? If its views are special, its conceptions of honor high, then it should not simply pose before the world, but it should in fact be Caste One. It should always be mindful of our Emperor's words: 'The best company for the officer is and always will be the officer.' You don't live up to this, and that brings me to my point. Look at the company the officers frequent to-day. They do not move in bad society, but they have too much society. The lieutenants are too much in demand. Everybody who

keeps an open house wants to have the officers with him. How do you treat that? You accept every invitation, unless there is something against the host which makes your appearance in his house an absolute impossibility. That is the case only in the rarest instances. Wherever a dinner, a supper, or some other entertainment beckons, with good eating and good drinking, there you find the officers. In order to eat and drink well, they go to people with whom they would not sit at table but for the fact that they are rich. It is a sad fact that money ennobles nowadays even in the eyes of the officers. The proud conception of honor which Caste One should cherish should not consider whether Mr. X—— is rich or poor, but only whether he is a man of honor. I have observed often enough how even old officers bow low before the money-bag, how they court the favor of rich people, how they make every effort to be introduced into a house from which a good dinner or a rich daughter beckons. In acting that way the officer lowers himself in the eyes of other people and becomes exposed to the contempt and ridicule of reasonable and thinking men."

"But, father," the son interposed.

"Let me finish. Up to this point you must agree, if you are just. However, the chief reason why I should like to change the social position of the officer is that existing conditions deprive him of pleasure in the service and force him into a false mode of life. If he goes to balls, evening after evening, he cannot attend to his duties early the next day. If he indulges

daily at other people's table in oysters and champagne, he cannot live modestly at the Casino or at home in the simple fashion he ought, in order to remain within his means, in order to be a shining model of the true Caste One. I don't blame the lieutenants entirely for the lives they lead, nor society either. The chief fault lies with their superiors. In my judgment, it is their duty to forbid the officers to carry social intercourse to such extremes. Mere admonitions not to live beyond their means will not do, nor is it of much use to read to the officers from time to time His Majesty's order: 'The more luxury and easy living abound, the more it behooves the officer to be a shining example of thrift and clean living,' or words to that effect. Such orders may cause the officer to be thrifty at the Casino; but life at the Casino has rarely been the cause of anybody's downfall. Society is the officer's ruin. It inoculates him with the mania of greatness, almost with the sense of being the special favorite of the Almighty. It instils into him the poison of feeling himself a being apart. Above all, it forces him to make debts, to live without God, in order to emulate the rich. Once you become an old fellow like myself, without money and without position, you will see and comprehend how society sinned against you by spoiling you in such fashion. A young lieutenant is obtuse enough to believe the invitations are tendered for his own sake, when they are meant only for the uniform."

"Not always."

"With the lieutenants always, I would bet my life

on that. Don't you know the late Emperor Frederick signed an order according to which his officers should wear uniform only when on duty, but should otherwise appear in civilian dress? I do not wish to pass judgment upon this ordinance from the highest quarter. It was never carried out. If it had been enforced it would have deprived the lieutenants of their social position with one stroke. The little girls would have been disappointed, the Krefeld Hussars would not have been in such a great demand. If you may believe me, the execution of this order would have done a great deal of good to the officers in many ways."

Fritz had listened to his father in astonishment. Now he said: "How would you picture our life to yourself after such changes? Without society, we could not exist, we should grow stale and stupid."

"Not in the least," the old major laughed. "Honestly, my boy, what does your conversation at social affairs amount to? You talk, that's all. You utter sweet nonsense. You gossip together. Did you ever attend an entertainment where you discussed a serious topic? You couldn't do it if you tried, because you are far too stupid for it! Don't feel offended by that harsh word. I know I am right. Nobody has the right to reproach you with your stupidity. The largest percentage of officers consists of cadets. What do they learn in their course of preparation? Athletics, riding, drawing, manners and deportment. What else? What you acquire as to sciences is hardly worth while, but will suffice for the career of a lieutenant."

I have belonged to the cadet corps myself, and can tell you that such life seemed to me horribly dull, because I realized I knew precious little of what a cultivated man ought to know. That a young lieutenant nowadays educates himself happens only in the rarest instances. If he works at all, he sticks to special branches, is glad to have completed his round of duty, to rest himself, or to fill his stomach with alcohol. Ah, the last occupation is not the worst; fill the glasses, my boy!"

Again they touched glasses.

"What were we talking about?" the major inquired. "Oh, yes, I recollect. Your intellectual cultivation does not tend to make you yearn for social affairs. On the contrary, if you were wiser, you would perceive what a bore it is to dine to-day at Miller's, to-morrow at Schulze's, and to dance attendance upon the young ladies. You could well dispense with the entertainment, but not with the little girls and the good living."

"What do you want, father? I don't understand you. Almost every week you read in the papers about a scandal in some small garrison. Either two drunken lieutenants box each other's ears, or they have seduced each other's wives, or contributed in some way^{won} to the *chronique scandaleuse*. There is always this plausible excuse: 'The men have nothing but the wine-room, which corrupts their morals. If they could have social life, like their comrades in the large cities, such affairs could not happen.' If we

had no more social affairs, we should simply rot. Yet you wish to take them from us."

"Not at all. I should only change it, simplify it, reorganize it. If nowadays two lieutenants meet in the morning at duty, and one tells the other how he went the day before to the Priyy Councillor's, it is dead sure the other will ask, 'Anything decent to eat?' Though the first speaker prides himself on his inability to commit anything to memory, he will grind out the whole long menu with all the brands of wine consumed. If an old staff officer who knows how to appreciate good wines does such a thing, I let it pass. The man is within his rights; it is his sacred duty gratefully to appreciate all the good wines the Lord permits to grow. But if a lieutenant at twenty does it, it is nothing but the desire to boast. Those young fellows have no idea as to what is placed before them, they are too inexperienced to understand it; but they are forced, as it were, to become *gourmands* and high livers. If a couple of lieutenants are asked to dinner somewhere, the good housewife wrings her hands: 'We cannot have this, we cannot have that, it isn't good enough. If we don't give the gentlemen something good to eat, they won't come again; they are so spoiled.' True ⁱⁿ general, it is the custom to invite to dinner the Captains and staff officers, and the lieutenants only to balls; but is the supper after a ball anything but a dinner served late in the evening? There is caviar, lobster *pâté de foie gras*, and such things. One bottle of champagne following another. That is the wrong society

inflicts upon the young officer. That's the way you are spoiled to such an extent that it becomes your hide-bound conviction: to live means only to live well. You see it everywhere, in every house. No wonder your ideas become warped."

"But how are you going to change social conditions?"

"I should arrange it so that in the future it should not be a matter of eating and drinking, but that people should find real sociability at such festivities, not merely a grand supper. First of all, the young lieutenant should in future be treated as a human being, not like a demigod. He should realize that trouble and expense are not taken for his sake, and that he is nothing more than a young man of decent family. His senses should not be intoxicated, he should be treated with courtesy and kindness, like any other guest, but he should not be preferred. If society resolves to take that course, the lieutenant will again be what he ought to be, and what he no longer is nowadays. He would lose his excessive self-conceit, perform his service with eagerness and pleasure, would again live a life of thrift and simplicity, would no longer be ashamed to own frankly: 'My means won't allow this or that.' The number of those who drop out because of their thoughtless mode of life would diminish rapidly. Later on, when the lieutenant would doff his uniform, he would no longer yearn for the flesh-pots of Egypt. He would know how to get along with his pension. If, during his whole term of service he had not been worshipped

like a second golden calf, he would bear it better later on not to play the first violin when pensioned. Another thing: If it has been made clear to him while an officer that he is not better than other human beings, he will not shrink from work and will not be ashamed of it after he has quitted the service. He will learn to fit himself for a position which enables him to support himself and his family. He will consider it respectable to live on money honestly earned, rather than to borrow and to run into debt."

Fritz was more and more astonished. "How do you come to hold such views?"

"How? I have always held them, though I did not always live up to them. You know the predicament I am in. Is it not natural I should ask myself who and what is at fault? I have thought about it seriously, and I have reached this conclusion: Society is at fault for spoiling us, as it is now spoiling you, and for throwing aside without regard anybody no longer wearing the uniform. Society means well; but, without intending it, is sinning against the lieutenants. In that sense, His Majesty is right in regard to the sentiment quoted: 'The best society for the officer is the officer.' Had I become a colonel, commanding a regiment, I should certainly have told my officers: 'Gentlemen, you will have to stop running to any house where a dinner smells nice; I shall name for you the families with whom you are allowed to associate.' I should then have selected for them only those houses where they would have had, in the first place, good family associations; secondly,

only a very simple supper. You may believe me, my son, at first my officers would have cursed and consigned me to the devil, but later on they would have toasted me. You remember what Bismarck said: 'Other nations can imitate everything we have, except the Prussian lieutenant.' The old gentleman was right then. Would he be so to-day?"

"With your permission, father—"

"Keep still, my son," the old major laughed; "you are my favorite, my spoiled boy. Would you assert seriously that you are the kind of Prussian lieutenant whom Bismarck praised?"

"Not exactly that," Fritz observed evasively, "but—"

"Drop it. Don't defend yourself any further. It's high time we should stop talking. I must have my siesta. At six o'clock I go to the 'Daeimierschoppen.' I hope you come along?"

"Why, certainly, papa."

"So long, then." And the old gentleman retired to his room.

At supper the family was united again. The two gentlemen had stayed longer than usual at the "Stammtisch." The men occupying that table were all pensioned officers. Day after day they talked about the army, about the promotion of their former associates, and were convinced that the latter by no means possessed more merit than they themselves. They would keep on talking, arguing, scolding. In that little circle the appearance of Fritz was a genuine sensation. They were heartily glad to have with

them at table a real lieutenant, though in civilian dress. They suddenly reached the conclusion that the usual sour Moselle wine was no suitable beverage for the occasion. So they ordered a better brand, and lingered chatting for a long time. The major and Fritz were rather silent during supper. The mother told of the visits made with Hildegarde. As she believed her husband in his gay mood would bear with more equanimity the disappointment that Warnow's present was only six thousand marks, she told him of it, and informed him that she had had the check cashed at the bank.

"It is not much, but it is something," said the major; "let me have the money."

His wife objected.

"Let me keep it till to-morrow. We may then consider what we are going to pay with it."

"To pay!" Fritz said. "Now you have a few pennies in your pocket, you mustn't be so foolish as to part with them immediately. If you pay one man, then they will all come, and the house will be overrun to-morrow when papa celebrates his birthday. Is anybody foolish enough to pay his debts?"

The major assented. "Fritz is right. He is a very sensible fellow. If the crowd has waited so long for their money, they may well wait a few weeks longer, until Hilda is engaged. Prosit, Hilda!"

Fritz, too, raised his glass. "This is to your intended, what's his name?—it don't matter. The main thing is he has money."

Hildegarde did not touch her glass. She would have preferred to leave the table. She could not bear the manner in which they spoke about her. She had to control herself not to burst into tears. If George knew how they drank his health, how they only thought of his money, not in the least of himself!

“If you won’t drink with us, let it alone,” Fritz said, emptying his glass.

The major returned to the subject of the money. “Do you know, wife, with those ducats we could make a fine trip. During the last three years we have never had a chance to leave this miserable place. We might set aside two thousand marks, so as to have something when we come back; the other four brown notes we might take and go to Italy for a few weeks.”

His wife was greatly tempted to assent to this plan; yet she said: “Later on, my dear, when Hilda is engaged. You shouldn’t forget her engagement may take place any day. In that case, we ought to be here on the spot in order to embrace the dear son-in-law.”

“We will embrace him,’ said the major. “We will fold him in our arms. He shall be astonished how tight we hold him. Eh, Fritz?” Turning to his wife, he said: “Just think of it, mother, our Fritz, the loafer, has debts amounting to forty thousand marks.” He could not stop laughing over his son’s achievement.

The mother clapped her hands in terror. “Fritz, how is it possible?”

Hildegarde, too, was aghast: "What do you do with all the money you get from home and from uncle?"

"Ask the stars, they know everything," he was about to sing; but he could not catch the tune at the moment; so his answer consisted only in a few inarticulate sounds.

The mother was still unable to calm herself. "That is terrible. Let us hope Hildegarde's future husband will pay your debts; but, suppose he doesn't, what then?"

"Then I'll put a bullet through my head. But he'll pay up. I'll see to that."

"Oh, that you had chosen another calling!" the mother wailed. "For one without money it is worse than insanity to become a lieutenant."

"It is," Fritz assented, "but what's the good of crying over spilt milk? You should have considered that before you started me as a cadet. I wasn't even asked about it."

"That's right; hear the fellow blame us for it," the major laughed.

"Father, I don't mean that. In a way I feel happy and at ease as a lieutenant. I don't know what else I should have become. But it has its drawbacks to be a lieutenant. There is no end of financial worries and of the ever-present fear to be dismissed sooner than you expect. Horrible sensation! I can't understand at all why fathers let their sons become officers. At least, I don't understand why dismissed officers in particular put their own sons into the uniform."

The 'alten Herren,' you, father, at their head, and all whom I saw to-day around the 'Stammtisch,' grumble over the wrong they suffer by being retired so early. They complain that the army no longer is what it once was. They groan over the smallness of the pension on which they have to rely for a living. They swear about the allowance they have to make to their sons; they know full well they can't get along with it and will have to contract debts. They know that at best the boy will only rise to the rank of a staff officer, and then will have to lead just such a miserable, embittered life as theirs until his death. They know yet more: how some accident on duty, an evening of gayety, some mad prank, may put a stop to the boy's career, and, knowing all that, they still let him become an officer. If it happens that the boy breaks down and has to take off the uniform, then there is a groaning and complaining, and the son alone is blamed for it."

"They do not all carry on as badly as you do," the major observed.

"You are right about that, but I don't speak of myself, I speak of general conditions. In my own regiment we are almost all sons of retired officers. I hear often enough one or the other complaining: 'Why didn't my father choose for me some other calling, since he must have known that I can't get along with such a small allowance?' Yes, why do the old officers continue to put their sons into the corps in spite of the reasons against it? Simply because the cadet corps means little expense, and so

the education of the boys becomes an easy matter for the parents. If the 'alten Herren' would have to pay for each boy in the cadet corps four or five hundred marks annually, besides the expense for clothing, instead of the eighty marks they are called upon to pay now, do you think they would still consider it a matter of course that their sons should become lieutenants? They wouldn't think of it. Now they simply say: let the boys grow up at little expense; as for the rest, we'll see later on. An old uncle, or an old aunt, is frequently counted upon, and if they should strike or leave this world, the lieutenant is in for it. He must either contract debts, or it is expected of him to live on air. People always talk of easy-going lieutenants, instead of talking of easy-going parents, who choose for their sons the very calling that makes it impossible for them to earn any money, while the temptation to spend it is the greatest imaginable. And all in order to save the expense of an education!"

"Very true," said the father, "but if an officer has no money to send his son to college, as in my case, what is he to do?"

"Fritz might have become a business man," observed Hildegarde. "If a man has no money, he should choose a calling where he can earn some."

"Very beautiful and true in theory," replied Fritz. "If many fathers had such wise ideas as you, my pretty sister, things would be better with our officers. The first-class men, Caste One, as father called us a little while ago, would not have to wander around,

begging and borrowing, trying their luck in gambling to keep their head above water, until they either make a rich match or go to the devil somehow."

The major had listened attentively to his son. Now he said: "I am surprised that you, the son of an old officer, should talk that way. According to your theory, who should make up the gaps in the ranks of the officers, if not we?"

"In the first place, only those who have the financial means to safeguard the future of their sons. Only those should become officers who really love the service, and are willing, under all circumstances, to make sacrifices and to suffer for it. You cannot ask of a little boy, put into the cadet corps at eight, that he should really understand what the love of a soldier's career means. A calling should be chosen only when one is old enough to have judgment about it. Reasons of economy and the like should not decide the fate of a boy put among the cadets. You cannot expect of such a boy that he should become a model of decent living and be possessed of a high sense of duty. If I had anything to say about it I should abolish the cadet corps."

"Ho, ho!" the major exploded, "you go a long way, better and better!"

Fritz coolly went on: "A while ago you explained to me at length that we don't learn much while in the corps. Aside from that, there is another great drawback: we come too soon into the army, we reach the rank of officers while we are too young. Frequently, young fellows become lieutenants at eighteen

or nineteen, suddenly attaining positions such as no other young men of their age occupy. We have the handling of money before we have learned how to use it properly. Think of the life in the corps: how the boys are watched and protected! Except in the cases of the select, they must not smoke, they must not drink beer, they must not have leave without being especially invited; they must bring proof in writing how long they have stayed with their relatives——”

“That seems to me very good,” observed Hildegarde.

“Maybe it is and maybe it isn’t. The transition later on to actual life is too sharp, too rapid. Twenty-four hours after leaving the corps, one is an ensign, enjoying at a stroke all the liberties heretofore so strictly withheld. The young man can eat and drink what he likes, he can smoke, he can go out. In short, on a sudden, he can enjoy in full the pleasures of life. No wonder the pendulum swings violently the other way in the realization that strict discipline is at an end. The exuberance of the spirit naturally leads to extremes. Can you blame the young ensign if he acquires bad habits at that age?” He continued: “As a young lieutenant, few only possess the energy to make a change. The other day we looked up in the army list how many of our comrades of our own age who were with us in the corps are still in the army. We were shocked to find how many of them had dropped out, gone to the devil. The education in the corps is to blame for it, nothing

else. An officer at nineteen, this list at twenty-three! That happens far oftener than people think. It proves that in the corps the cadets don't even learn the one thing they really ought to know: to control themselves, and later on to live as officers in the proper way. Too much stress is laid in the corps upon the drill, upon the practise in arms, upon the hours of work, and such things, and not enough on the formation of character. It is a sort of artificial education, not a development of the individual. The corps can never supplant the family home. What the child sees living with his parents, what he hears and learns there unconsciously, is a thousand times better than all the forced education in the corps."

"But how would you change it?" asked the major, very much interested in the subject. The ladies had risen and seated themselves at another table, and were busied with needlework.

"I don't know," said Fritz, "perhaps there is a remedy. As I said, the corps should be abolished and each officer should pass successfully through college, as was formerly the case in regard to the navy. There might be an age limit, say twenty years. Then a young fellow might become lieutenant at twenty-two. That would be early enough, and would do away with the necessity of forever figuring about the age question. The age limit in the army would have to cease. To-day the man who does not reach a certain stage at such and such an age has no chance to make a career. Why should the army be kept young by forced methods? Hundreds upon hundreds are

thrown out every year by this forced process of rejuvenation. It brings to the army a steady flow of new elements, new superiors, new views. It does not make the education of the rank and file more easy. If the young man is lieutenant at twenty-two, he may be captain at thirty-five, major at forty-four, commander of a regiment at forty-eight. Isn't that early enough? If he shows extraordinary talents he would advance even quicker."

"How would that effect the efficiency of the force for service in the field?"

"You ought to be able to answer that better than I, since you are retired on a pension as an invalid. Tell me frankly whether you did not feel vigorous and young enough for field service after your retirement, in spite of your alleged invalidity?"

"To be sure," the major replied, "I should say so. The staff physician fumbled with me long enough without finding any ailment that would warrant his death certificate for me. At last I came to his assistance, naming an ailment from which I did not suffer. That settled it. I could have stood it easily for another five or ten years. At the Pension Office in any large city you might scrutinize the many officers appearing there the first of every month to draw their pension, their sorry penny, as they call it. They are all down in the list as invalids, as men retired because of advanced age; yet they are hale and hearty physically."

"We, too, say that to ourselves. At the Casino we have talked about such matters lately. Of course

that leads nowhere, yet it is interesting to hear what the comrades think about it. As I said, we are agreed among us on this point: Away with the cadet corps; let the college certificate of maturity be indispensable for every lieutenant. Let no one become an officer before the completion of his twenty-first year. You would see many things change for the better. It is nonsense to have a lad of eighteen stand in the front as the youngest lieutenant and shout at the big recruits. No wonder the funny papers make sport of us. Such boys are caricatures in themselves."

There was a long pause. The major had considered Fritz's remarks calmly, and now said: "Fritz, in many respects you have sensible views."

"So it seems to me," Hildegarde interposed, "I offer you my compliments, Fritz. Hearing you talk so seriously and to the point, I did not recognize my light-hearted brother."

Fritz bowed to his sister. "Much obliged! They say in the regiment that I have lucid moments, but those illuminations of my mind are rare; my spiritual darkness disappears only when I drink copiously. It is then that I begin to think, because otherwise I lack the courage. I always feel myself to be a social democrat."

"Fritz! that's fine. You, a lieutenant, a social democrat—that caps the climax!"

"Children, calm yourselves!" Fritz begged. "I have not so far drunk brotherhood with Bebel. When I say I am a social democrat, I don't mean I have signed the platform of the party. The division of all

property might suit me very well, provided I came out ahead. What I meant to say was that I am a disgruntled noble. That we all of us are, everyone of us, from the colonel down to the youngest lieutenant. One can't always express his sentiments as one should like, one has to consider the uniform; yet there is plenty of dissatisfaction, not only in ours, but in all the regiments."

"It was different at my time," observed the major. "We argued and found fault, but otherwise——"

"Father, it was different then. Then there was a major's corner, where people came to grief as first lieutenant; now one can be put on ice and be transferred to some district command or the like. Formerly it was a so-called day of honor, a festival, if a high superior came to make an inspection. Now there is trembling for weeks till he arrives, and trembling for weeks when he is gone, for fear of dismissal. Formerly we had a triennial service for the privates. Now we are to teach the men all they ought to know in two years, and the present requirements in regard to the service and out of it are not to be compared with former decades. As to money affairs! I won't speak of myself, I'm a thoughtless dog. Now and then somebody tries to get along with his allowance, but is actually prevented by his superiors. There is an entertainment here, another there, a love feast, guest day, birthday anniversary, garden festival with ladies, jubilee of the regiment, leave-taking dinner; even the man who desires to live sensibly can't get away from the champagne bot-

tle. He has to do as the others do. I wonder whether in your time there were as many deductions from the salary as we have for presents, flowers, funds for the Casino, and a thousand other things? Then the debts for dress! I believe I owe my court tailor alone five thousand marks. There is always something new, other cloaks, other caps, other coats, other buttons, other sashes! So it goes all the time. Who has to pay for it? The lieutenant. Where does he get the money from? That's his business. On the one side we are always admonished to be thrifty, not to spend money. On the other we are steadily forced into new expenditures. Some time that must change, or else our corps of officers will be ten times deeper in debt ten years from now than they are to-day. This afternoon, in conversation, you, father, blamed society for the fact that we live beyond our means. We officers blame our superiors for it. We always have to find the money for purposes of show; what we live on is our business. If it is found that we have incurred debts, there is the devil to pay. We are ordered to settle everything inside of three days, if possible. On such occasions we are threatened with dismissal, in order that the colonel may not be dismissed himself, because he did not know how to guard and preserve us from running into debt. Only recently I had such an experience myself. I owed four hundred marks at the Casino, and had my choice, either to pay within twenty-four hours or to be punished with five days' confinement to my quarters. Naturally, I paid, and

the colonel was satisfied. It did not occur to him to inquire where I got the money."

"Where did you get it?"

"Borrowed it of a Jew, of course. I am not a magician; I cannot conjure money out of the air. That is precisely the unreason of it all. One is compelled to contract new debts to pay off the old ones of which the commander has heard."

"Does your colonel know that you are in debt?"

"Of course he knows it, though he probably has no inkling how deep. He says to himself: 'What I don't know don't bother me. I don't worry about matters unless they come to my notice officially.' His own career, his own future, are nearer to his heart than mine. It does not concern him whether I am kicked out or not; but if I go, possibly he may have to go too. Therefore he closes, not only both eyes, but also both ears. He wants neither to see nor to hear, because he knows only too well I am by no means the only one. If he were to proceed against one he would have to do the same thing in regard to others. He is mighty careful not to do it. He wants to become a general. Let his successor establish order among the corps of officers."

It was late when they retired. Father and son might have continued the conversation through the night, but the ladies insisted on making an end of it for the time. To-morrow was a festival day, which would bring many calls, many congratulations, many demands on physical endurance.

The festival day did not begin according to expecta-

tion. It had become known that Hildegarde had cashed a check bearing her father's name. The news spread in the small town with lightning-like rapidity. Everybody hearing it who had a claim against the major determined to call in the morning and ask him to pay the bill now outstanding for years. Everybody counted on being the first caller.

They were still at the early breakfast when the claimants were announced. The major knew what was in store for him. He cursed and swore like mad: "That comes of you women folks meddling with money matters! How could you cash a check when anybody stands by and sees the transaction? Why should there have been a check? Couldn't Warnow have sent the paltry few thousand marks in cash? Then nobody would have known anything about it. Now I have to let them clean me out. But I won't think of it!" he burst out suddenly, "I won't think of it! To have my birthday spoiled by that impudent crowd. I'll kick the whole caboodle into the street."

"Won't you let me talk to the people?" Fritz asked. "I have practise in such things, I understand how to handle them. Nobody ever got anything out of me. I can't understand, papa, why you should get excited over such a trifle. Just leave it to me."

He started to go out, when his mother restrained him. "That won't do, Fritz; you don't know how often the sheriff has been here. So far he has only sealed a part of our furniture, but did not actually levy on it. Now, if the people know that we have

money, he will have to levy. He has told us so himself. We don't want papa to go through that experience to-day."

"No, not that." Fritz had grown very serious, and involuntarily looked around for the sheriff's seals.

"He only sealed pieces where you don't see it," the mother whispered to her son, "the carpets, the piano, the bookcase, the pictures, in short, all the things on the walls. Oh, it is terrible!" She began to cry.

"Now you must whimper," the major burst out. "Formerly there was a serenade to celebrate my birthday. Now, when I have grown gray and old, my wife begins to cry because there is no money, while the creditors wait outside. So it is for this I have lived to the age of sixty, to celebrate the day in this fashion?"

He walked up and down the room, cursing, and listening to the voices of the people who stood outside in the hall waiting for him.

Suddenly he stopped in front of Hildegarde, put his hand upon her shoulder and said: "Well, Hilda, you perceive we really can't wait much longer for your intended. Bring him to us soon, before it is too late, before the crowd here has taken everything away from me; before they sell off our furniture; before your mother and I are thrown into the street."

There was so much bitterness in his words, such a despondency, that Hildegarde at this moment could not think of herself, but only of her parents, though she was treated simply as an anchor to windward. She, too, burst out crying.

"Number two," the major scolded, "that's right."

"Don't be unjust, father," Fritz begged; "you can't blame mother and Hildegarde for being sad. The matter is more than disagreeable to me also."

"Then you, too, may begin to howl," the old man cursed, the veins on his forehead swelling.

"I don't mean to. What I am thinking is how the people may be satisfied. I did not know the seals were put on your things. You should not have kept that from me."

After a moment he inquired: "For what sum are the seals put on?"

"For a paltry two thousand marks."

"That will have to be paid off to-day."

"I don't think of it, the seals don't trouble me."

"The two thousand marks will have to be paid off for all that," Fritz continued, with decision. "If you don't pay them, I will. I have won a few thousand at play and I will make you a present of the two thousand." The major looked at his son in astonishment.

"What prompts this magnanimity in you?"

"Regard for myself and for Hildegarde. It is just possible my regiment might get an inkling of how things stand with you here. That would undermine not only my position, but my credit. It might have for me consequences neither you nor I would like. You must also think of Hildegarde. Just imagine her intended paying you a visit within the next few weeks, possibly the next few days. Suppose, through some unfortunate coincidence, he noticed

the seals. In that case the man would have to be a downright idiot if his eyes were not opened to the fact that he is only married for his money. Such enlightenment before the wedding must be prevented at all hazards. If you don't see to it, I will."

The major had dropped into a chair, where he sat in a brown study. The two women were crying softly.

Fritz had risen and turned to his mother. "I am going to talk with the people. Give me the six thousand marks."

"Oh, the money!" the major groaned. For the first time in a long while he had slept through the whole night, his cares not keeping him awake a single moment. The sensation of having six thousand marks cash in the house had filled him with a great joy and given him a feeling of safety. Now people were standing outside to take that money away.

"Fritz," he turned to his son, "promise me to haggle with the crowd as much as ever you can. Don't give away every cent, or else we shall have no money in the house."

"With my housekeeping allowance I can get along until the first," the mother observed, "I still have a hundred marks."

"I can give you another hundred marks, mamma," said Hildegarde. "Aunt has provided me with ample money for travelling expenses."

"I will add another hundred marks," said Fritz. He had no family attachment whatever; but the distress which had invaded the place seemed to him most

unsuitable for their station. A man must lend a helping hand to his family in order not to be looked upon as a beggar's son.

Before opening the door Fritz turned around. "Papa, you want me to talk to the people, or would you rather go yourself——"

But the major declined. "Better you go; I should grow angry. You better see what you can do."

Fritz went into the adjoining room and made all those who stood outside enter together. They were craftsmen and shopkeepers. They knew Fritz personally, greeted him with great friendliness, and were modest in their demeanor.

In the regiment Fritz was known as proud and supercilious; but he could be extremely amiable if he wished to flatter anybody. Now he shook hands all around, inquired after everybody's family and cracked a joke or two. Thus his little game was already half-won when he began: "My father is not feeling well to-day, and therefore asked me to speak to you and to pay his bills as far as he is able. A good many of you are now here together, but we'll come to some understanding. Of course we can't pay everything at once. You know how, through the failure of his bank, my father lost the larger part of his fortune," he prevaricated unblushingly, "but within the next few months we shall secure a large sum from our family endowment, and then everybody will be paid to the last cent. What we can give to-day is a payment on account. I feel sure that will be satisfactory to all of you. As you know, my father cele-

brates his sixtieth birthday. You would not spoil the day which he desires to celebrate with his wife and his children?"

No, they didn't wish to do that. They knew very well they would get their money in the end; but they had heard the major had received a large sum yesterday, and so they wanted a little of it themselves.

Fritz was overjoyed at these words. Evidently those people were far more reasonable and decent than he expected. So he made the mental reservation of saving at least a one-thousand-mark note for his parents. These creditors would be more than satisfied if he divided the five thousand marks in cash among them.

He made them hand him their bills. A satisfied smile played around his mouth when he added the sum total; all in all it amounted to only ten thousand marks. "I shall save my thousand," he thought. Then he took up the claimants one by one, talking earnestly to each. Finally his plan was successful. They all were content to receive about one-half their claims, and to wait with the rest for another three months.

It took Fritz fully an hour to finish with them and to obtain from each a written consent not to urge payment for the next few months, nor to send any bills. In order to keep the people in good humor while they were waiting he offered them wine and cigars. They drank the wine, touching glasses with the son to the health of the father, but they did not

dare to smoke in the presence of the Herr Lieutenant and in the room of the Herr Major.

At last they started to go. Again Fritz had a handshake and a friendly word for everybody, and they parted as good friends. Their laughter as they left could be heard in the breakfast room, where the rest of the family waited for the outcome of the negotiations.

Fritz returned, beaming with joy, and put a thousand marks upon the table. "I have saved this. For the time being they are all satisfied, and will give you a rest for the next three months. Then Hildegarde will be married. Once she is engaged I shall be able to raise that trifling amount for you; I have achieved far more difficult things. I should like to know one thing, papa; those few debts, altogether about ten thousand marks, could not rob you of your night's rest. I thought you owed at least seventy or eighty thousand marks."

"I do, perhaps even more. I never had the courage to add it up."

"Little use in doing that, if one can't pay," Fritz observed, indifferently. Then, partly from curiosity and partly because of genuine interest, he inquired, "To whom else do you owe, papa?"

"All over. The bills are something tremendous, partly of many years' standing."

"Then a good many of them must be outlawed."

"Fritz!" protested Hildegarde, "the people must get their money."

"Easily said," observed the major, "but where

from? I haven't anything, at least not for the time being."

"Do you owe on promissory notes?" Fritz inquired. "You must not take my question amiss, but since I am acting to-day, as it were, as the administrator of your finances, I should like to get a clear idea of your condition."

"No," the father assured him, "no notes of mine circulate, but I owe to all my acquaintances; to the one five, to the other three, to the other one thousand marks, and so on."

"Oh, you shouldn't worry about that, papa. If anybody assists a friend in distress, he knows full well that in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand he won't get his money back. I can't see why you should be a laudable exception. Whoever lends you such a sum realizes from the beginning that he'll never see the money again."

"That may be," the old major said; "but, after all, the people only gave me the money because I told them of Hildegarde's coming engagement."

"Papa!" exclaimed Hildegarde. A hot flush rose to her face; she felt deeply indignant. "So it has come to that!" Not only do you think and talk among yourselves of nothing but my possible engagement, you even tell other people about it, in order to obtain credit."

Her mother laid her hand upon the daughter's shoulder to calm her. "Dear Hildegarde, you shouldn't look at it in that way. The people to whom we talked are intimate acquaintances."

The major, too, endeavored to calm his daughter; but Hildegarde was inaccessible to any such reasoning. "I simply can't show myself any more in the street. You have made me positively impossible here. Now I understand the hints thrown out yesterday by the friends of mamma, when they inquired so assiduously how I was. To-morrow I leave; I shan't stay here another day." Bursting into tears, she left the room.

"That's a charming birthday celebration," the major swore under his breath, slamming his fist on the table.

"Hildegarde will calm down by-and-by," said Fritz. "She is a sensible girl, only the money affairs caused her some irritation. By noon she will be the same as ever. I think I shall arrange the affair with the sheriff, else I shouldn't enjoy the champagne later on."

Though in the afternoon the seals were removed from the furniture, the champagne did not taste good. The household was in a dreary mood. When the major retired he owned to himself that he had never celebrated so dismal a birthday as that of his sixtieth year.

VIII

Little Willberg had shot himself.

The regiment mourned the loss of the comrade who had been everybody's favorite. Yet they could not forgive him that he had not quitted the army before leaving life. Twenty-four hours, more or less, could not have mattered much. His dismissal could have been obtained within that time. They could not understand why he should not have showed regard for his regiment, which he loved, and of which he was proud. What one officer does always reflects upon the whole of the corps. Willberg should have realized that; he should have considered that his suicide would cause no end of trouble to his regiment.

Such was the general view. How correct this was seemed to be proven by the fact that the newspapers of the capital occupied themselves minutely with little Willberg's death. An effort had been made to hush up the story. At the suggestion of the commander, the aide-de-camp, Count Wettborn, had paid a visit to all the papers, begging them not to publish anything about the sad case. Only to the two social democratic papers the Count did not go; he could not bring himself to such a step. Those papers published day after day new disclosures about the life of the suicide. More than the officers had anticipated came to light. The Yellow Butterflies were indignant to see pub-

lished broadcast all those things which, according to their own idea, did not concern anybody. The worst of it was that people drew from the life of the dead conclusions by no means flattering to the spirit and conduct of the regiment.

The Yellow Butterflies were beside themselves. That such a thing should happen to them who had been so aristocratic, who had enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most feudal infantry regiments! That it should be a scion of the oldest nobility who furnished cause for such judgments! To the newspapers this was a welcome opening for renewed attacks upon nobility, for demonstrations that the people of blue blood were not a whit better or more decent than those who had to be satisfied with ordinary red blood.

What made matters still more unpleasant was the fact that the reports were apparently true. Willberg had gone very far and been implicated in affairs by no means clean. Much cropped out of which the comrades had had no inkling. The commander was in an uninterrupted state of profanity. The first day after the suicide the regimental bureau was stormed by people who had claims against Willberg and were seeking advice as to where those claims could be presented and paid. During the following days, when people were no longer admitted, no end of letters came, showing more or less dirty episodes in Willberg's life.

That it should be one of the nobility who caused the regiment their shame and humiliation! Nobody

said outright, but they all thought: If only Winkler had shot himself instead of little Willberg, what a fine position they would occupy. Then they could throw out their chests and exclaim with pride: "See, we of the nobility are so much better!" Yet it was the nobleman who was dead, and the "Buergerlicher" who was alive.

Nobody among the Yellow Butterflies knew what drove Willberg so suddenly to his death. He left no letter, not a line, furnishing the least explanation. Naturally the commander inquired of the comrades whether any of them could throw light upon the affair. The Yellow Butterflies could only look at each other and shrug their shoulders. They knew little Willberg had gambled and lost; but such a thing had happened often. If he didn't shoot himself before for this reason, why should he do it this time? This view was strengthened by the fact that the Uhlan stated upon inquiry that Willberg had paid his gambling debt to him before he died. This statement was not in accord with truth. On the contrary, the Uhlan had earnestly reminded Willberg that the time for discharging his debt had expired. He had admonished him that one could never be too correct in the regulation of such affairs which were considered debts of honor. Thereupon Willberg had shot himself. The Uhlan, though he felt no remorse for having driven his comrade to suicide, was not anxious for his own sake that the truth should come out.

The day after the funeral it occurred to the regi-

mental aide-de-camp to question Willberg's orderly and to see whether he could not furnish some information. But the man knew nothing, though he was put through a regular inquisition. At last he seemed to remember. "One evening I went with a letter to Herr Lieutenant Winkler. My lieutenant was waiting at home for an answer, and when it came he was more excited than I have ever seen him. I heard him walk up and down for hours, and when I wanted to wake him up the next morning, he had not been in his bed at all, but was lying asleep on the sofa."

"You probably don't know what was contained in the letter you took to Lieutenant Winkler?"

The fellow didn't know. They let him go, and the aide-de-camp told his commander what he had learned. Upon receiving this news, the colonel paced up and down excitedly. "How long is Lieutenant Winkler still on furlough?"

The Count looked up the record. "He will have to report to-morrow noon."

"So much the better. Otherwise I should have him recalled by wire. I want to see him to-morrow by all means. The higher authorities demand a full report about Willberg's death. Until now I have been faced by a puzzle. Possibly some light may be thrown upon the case through Winkler."

George read in Paris of Winkler's death. Though the news shocked him at first, it could not make him sad. During these last days he had thanked Olga almost every hour because she had persuaded him to make the trip. He did not deceive himself into be-

lieving that he could have been able to face Willberg calmly. So he felt relieved when he learned of his death. He almost thanked heaven for sparing him a meeting with him. Of course it seemed sad that Willberg should die so young, but his death meant no loss for the army and for the corps of officers. He had dreaded meeting him again. Now he returned to his garrison in a serene and cheerful mood. Two delicious weeks lay behind him. Olga and he had enjoyed life in the beautiful city in full. The furlough had been a real recreation, and he was rejoiced to return to his work and to his people.

“The colonel desires to speak to the lieutenant tomorrow morning at eleven o’clock at the office of the regiment.”

That was the notice George found on coming home. For a moment he felt a little embarrassed. Was it possible the commander had learned that he had been to Paris without having leave to cross the boundary lines? Well, the penalty for such an offence was not so very heavy, at the worst a few days’ confinement to your room. That shouldn’t spoil the memory of the holiday.

The first words the colonel addressed to him in the morning dispelled his fears in that regard. The colonel inquired how he had liked the Riviera, and immediately entered upon the main point on his mind. He stated what Willberg’s former orderly had said, and asked George what he knew about it. “It seems to me important to know what was contained

in the letter Willberg sent you. Can and will you inform me on that point?"

George reflected for a moment, and then said: "Since I am not explicitly pledged to silence, I believe I am guilty of no indiscretion in replying to your inquiry."

"Have you still Willberg's letter?"

"I have not, Colonel, but I recollect its contents. Herr von Willberg wrote me he had gambled and needed five thousand marks to discharge a debt of honor. If he didn't get the money, he would have to resort to the pistol to restore his honor."

"That d—— gambling!" the colonel swore. "If it only could be eradicated once for all, root and branch." After a moment he inquired: "Did you give him the money?"

"No, colonel."

"The gambling debt is paid," Count Wettborn interposed. "The colonel needn't be concerned about that."

The commander felt greatly relieved. "I'm glad to hear it." Turning again to George: "So you didn't give him the money? May one know why not? Please understand me. Whether you were willing to lend Willberg the amount or not, was of course entirely your own affair. What I mean is, were you possibly unable to let him have the money, or did you not take his threat to commit suicide seriously?"

"I must own to you, Colonel, I didn't reflect at all on that point. I was about coming to Herr von Willberg's assistance, when I learned about him facts

which made it impossible for me to carry out my purpose."

"What was it?" The colonel and Count Wettborn looked at George with intense interest.

"I can only answer in a general way, because I am pledged to secrecy."

"Pledged to the dead?"

"No, to a living person, the same to whom I owe my information." After a pause he went on: "When I was about to send to Herr von Willberg the money he asked, I learned by accident of his behavior toward a young lady very near to me. He had behaved toward her in such a manner that any court of honor upon learning the facts of the case would have been obliged to decree his dismissal from the army in disgrace. From that moment I was no longer able to see in Herr von Willberg a cavalier and a man of honor, and I will assist only such."

The colonel was all ears for what George had to say. The affair was most disagreeable. Nobody could tell what else would come to light. He would have preferred not to inquire further. But that would not answer. He said: "You know it is your duty to report to the council of honor dishonorable actions of a comrade coming to your knowledge."

"Certainly, Colonel. Most decidedly I should have done so, had I not been obliged to regard the interests of the young lady who would have been seriously compromised by my report to the council of honor. I did not believe I could assume that responsibility. On the other hand, being myself connected with the

regiment for a comparatively short time only, I did not wish to be the cause of an investigation against a comrade universally liked. So I preferred to keep silence at least for the time. In order to consider calmly whether I could justify my silence before myself and the corps of officers, I went on furlough. Another reason for my going was that I wished to avoid a meeting with Herr von Willberg in the excited state in which I found myself. Though I can control myself pretty well, a quarrel between me and the dead would have resulted, and a duel would have deemed Herr von Willberg still capable of entering an honorable combat."

"Lieutenant Winkler!" the colonel broke out aghast. "An officer of my regiment, a member of an ancient noble family, not capable of entering an honorable combat! Pray consider what you are saying."

"I do, Colonel; it is not easy for me to make such an accusation against a dead man who cannot defend himself."

"Then why do you do it?"

"In order to prove to the Colonel that as a decent man, I could do nothing else but refuse the money to Herr von Willberg."

That sounded so calm, so firm and distinct, so candid and honest, that the commander rose and shook hands with George. "I not only believe that, but I am absolutely satisfied of it. As far as I can judge, you have acted properly throughout. I thank you for not having reported hastily to the council of

honor. An investigation of the council of honor directed against a comrade is never a pleasant thing, much less so in a case such as this, likely to stir up a great deal of mud."

"A great deal," George confirmed, "more than one would have thought possible."

"Then we'd better let the matter rest," the commander decided. "Willberg has expiated his guilt with his death, you are pledged to secrecy, let the secret remain between the two of you."

After a few more questions, the colonel dismissed George, and turned to his aide-de-camp: "Dear Count, what do you think of it?"

Count Wettborn deliberately polished his monocle, then said: "I can't help it, dear Colonel, but I find Winkler has behaved blamelessly during the whole affair."

"Entirely my own view. It's very fortunate, though, that he must not speak. The less said about the dead, the better. I almost hear in advance the queries of the Brigade and Division, how Willberg could lead such a life without my knowing it. Be careful, under certain conditions this affair might break both of us, for you would be reproached with not keeping me informed about the doings of the officers, particularly in so far as Willberg's actions were concerned. I can't busy myself with every individual lieutenant, I can't watch each separately as to whether he lives within his means or not. That's what you're here for, dear Count, it is for you to caution the younger comrades if they are too easy-

going. When you see that your words are of no avail, then you have to report to me, so that I may take steps against the gentlemen in question."

The colonel was much excited. He was seriously afraid of being dismissed from the army. When the papers published the sensational article about little Willberg, he had been commanded to report to His Majesty. His Majesty had been so ungracious that the colonel felt very uncomfortable indeed. His Majesty had said in plain words: "I must hold my regimental commanders responsible for the behavior of their officers. If such affairs as this take place, it is not only a disgrace to the regiment, which has always enjoyed my special good will and favor, it is a disgrace to the whole army."

The colonel could only offer the excuse that little Willberg had always been able to deceive not only him but the whole body of officers. To some extent that assuaged His Majesty's anger. "But the affair is a scandal for all that." The commander had been dismissed ungraciously, and still trembled for his career. The aide-de-camp succeeded in calming him. If the colonel was to be dismissed, it would have been done by this time. Since the commander had already reported to His Majesty, it was now entirely inconsequential what the Brigade and the Division would say. No harm would come to the colonel nor to himself. He personally could not be held responsible in any way. Yet he was glad that George was pledged to secrecy; otherwise more gambling stories might have come to light. It might have broken him, if it

had become known that he in his capacity as aide-de-camp of the regiment not only tolerated gambling at the casino, but actually arranged for it in a way. The count was glad that the affair should end in smoke, and he resolved to say a good word to the lieutenants for George on the next occasion that offered itself, telling them: "Winkler behaved faultlessly. Of course I do not wish to influence you, but I leave it to you to consider whether you ought not to be a little more friendly toward him in the future."

On one of the following days the count addressed his comrades in a carefully prepared speech; but he made little impression. What Winkler had done anybody else might have done in his place. Was there anything remarkable about it? It was really not at all correct to make accusations without proving them. He ought to have told all or nothing.

Such were the reflections of the comrades. The count listened to these remarks amazed and embarrassed. At last he grew serious. "Gentlemen, I can only repeat that according to the judgment of the colonel and my own, Winkler has behaved blamelessly. If you believe there is the least reason for proceeding against Winkler, you are entirely mistaken. I can only urge you not to hint even to Winkler the views you just now confided to me. Consequences you would not like would be the inevitable result. I beg of you to remember this."

The gentlemen did remember, but what the count told them did not contribute toward changing their sentiments in regard to Winkler. Formerly the latter

was only in their way; now they began to hate him. It was distasteful to them that George, an outsider, from whom they had tried to keep aloof, should know more of Willberg's life than they did; that he should know dishonorable facts about the dead, which, according to the count, had better be kept from the public. They felt George should speak out so that they could judge whether Willberg had really done such horrible things. They would judge him justly, but also with the consideration due to one of their own station. How could the count talk in that way? What he had said practically amounted to this: You have every reason for being grateful to Winkler for going on furlough in order to prevent a meeting with Willberg, and a duel in consequence. Was that not adding insult to injury? They, the noble officers, should be grateful to the one "Buergerlicher" among them? The idea revolted them. Who could know whether the motives advanced by George for his trip were really of such a nature? Possibly he might have said to himself: "If I see him, it will lead to a duel;" and he took his trip only because he felt sure that on his return he would not find Willberg among the living. Simply from cowardice he had avoided the duel, had shown the white feather. Could such an officer be tolerated in the regiment?

The longer the comrades talked about the case, the more they worked themselves into a rage. At their meetings in the regimental home, wine flowed freely, adding to the heat of their excited feeling.

"We must send a delegation to the colonel, mak-

ing a declaration that we refuse to remain in the same officers' corps with Winkler. Either he or we!" shouted a hoarse voice.

Those more sensible counselled calmness. Perhaps it was not as bad as that. Why should they risk their own existence for Winkler's sake? Everybody knew how His Majesty favored him. If it became known in the highest quarters what they thought about Winkler, and that they had resolved no longer to wear the same uniform, possibly His Majesty would take it ungraciously, all the more so since His Majesty did not look upon their regiment with marked favor. Better let grass grow first over Willberg's grave; afterward they could turn against George. For the present, they could do nothing except to show him more distinctly than before that he was not welcomed as a comrade. Perhaps that would cause him to bring about his own transfer. If he as a "Buergerlicher" was too obtuse for that, steps might be taken to force him to it.

George soon noticed the feeling which existed against him. He was treated with extreme coldness. His comrades spoke to him only when they couldn't avoid it, and replied to his questions in the curtest possible way.

For two weeks he endured this behavior. Then he spoke to the aide-de-camp, the only officer who had treated him during that time like a comrade.

"I know you would come to speak to me," said the count, "I have done all I could to allay the feeling existing against you among the officers. I took your

part and cautioned the comrades not to drive you to extremes. To my regret I have not succeeded. You know, without my telling you, that most of them resent your behavior in the Willberg affair. They know he tried to borrow of you, and they blame you for not having given him the money. They believe that possibly Willberg would not have been obliged to commit suicide, if you had come to his assistance. Whether your money would really have saved him—since his gaming debt was paid—or whether other causes forced the pistol into his hand, only Willberg himself could decide, and he is silent forever. I tried to make the matter clear to the others, but I failed. They seem to have several grudges against you."

George sat, pale as death, facing the aide-de-camp. "That's it, eh? I have thought so for a long time, but I never expected such reproaches from them. What can I do about it?"

"I have already talked to the commander. The easiest thing for you would be to move an investigation of the affair by the court of honor; only there seems to be not the slightest cause for it. Perhaps the sentiment against you would change if you could impart to the commander and to me what you learned at the last moment about Willberg, what prevented you from assisting him, what caused you to make such weighty accusations against him. Couldn't you tell me? If you wish, I would keep silence about it, though it would be the most natural thing, and the best if everybody could know all."

"I must reserve my decision on that point. For

the present I have only permission to tell you what I know if I deem it absolutely necessary. I now believe that for my own sake I must break my silence." He told Count Wettborn all that Olga had confided to him.

The aide-de-camp listened attentively. When George had finished, the count sat silent for a time.

"May I ask what you think about it, Count?"

The latter still remained silent. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. "For shame!" He shook himself with disgust, and repeated: "For shame!"

George had felt convinced from the beginning of the correctness of his action; yet now he breathed a sigh of relief. "Then you understand that I could not give him the money?"

The count quickly turned toward him. "Understand? Of course, it goes without saying that—this"—he seemed to grope for some epithet applicable to Willberg, but refrained at the last moment: "I think it is easily comprehensible that you could not assist him under such circumstances, and that everybody will share my view. I can appreciate with you and the young lady how painful it would be to let the story become known. Still, you need not give the name of the party concerned."

"I don't believe I would get permission to do that. I'll assume the responsibility of asking you to acquaint the commander with the facts. Perhaps he can then talk to the gentlemen, and tell them he is fully informed, and finds my course of action entirely correct. That might bring about the result desired."

"It must. I shall ask the commander to talk to the gentlemen severely. If they won't come to their senses voltuntarily, they must be brought up with a round turn. Be assured the commander and I will do for you whatever we can."

"I thank you."

The aide-de-camp turned to go, and extended his hand to George on taking leave. It was the first time the count had shaken hands with him. It was the first friendly act George had encountered for a long while; it was the first time that anybody had spoken to him with warmth and cordiality, and taken his part. It meant no material change so far, but for all that he felt better and happier. It gave him great satisfaction to know that his action was appreciated as entirely correct.

Olga could hardly recognize him when he came to her in the evening. Lately she had been to see him almost every day, because he remained at home evening after evening, brooding over the outcome of his plight. He had not accepted any invitations. He had lived by himself and written long letters to his parents about his troubles. He felt the need to tell his people, but when the letters were written, Olga invariably threw them into the stove. "Your parents can neither help nor advise you. Why should you excite and trouble them needlessly," she told him when she destroyed his first letter. He admitted that she was right.

To-day she inquired immediately whether he had written his usual letter of complaint, and wouldn't

believe him when he replied he had not written at all.

“What in the world has happened?”

He told of his conversation with the aide-de-camp, and finally asked: “May everybody know how Willberg has behaved toward you?”

Olga sat long in deep meditation. At last she said: “I love you very much, and if it would help you, I would gladly give you permission to speak frankly. But it wouldn’t be wise, not for your own sake. Whose concern is it if we two associate together? Everybody knows that a young lieutenant is not a chaste Joseph; but it isn’t necessary to cry from the housetops that such an attachment exists. The world need not know the name of the woman, nor what has happened to her. Some people would blame you for associating with me; why should you expose yourself to such attacks?”

He kissed her on the forehead. “You are right, as you always are. The whole city would at once know of our relations, and I would be the subject of criticism.”

Suddenly he thought how Hildegarde would receive such news. He had seen her only once since his return, but his thoughts had been with her every day. Now her image rose distinctly in his mind.

“George, what makes you think so seriously?”

He started from his meditation, Olga stood laughing before him.

“Did you forget me altogether? For a whole minute you were lost in thought. What were you thinking of?”

He did not tell her. "Don't be angry," he begged, "my thoughts were a-travelling."

"To beautiful Paris?"

Involuntarily he smiled. "Not altogether, for now they are again with you." And tenderly he drew her to him.

IX.

A meeting of the officers had been held. All the gentlemen of the regiment, with the exception of Lieutenant Winkler, were ordered to attend. The colonel on that occasion handled his lieutenants without gloves. He was in a state of irritation, constantly fearing his dismissal. He was not disposed to have another scandal among his officers; such a scandal was inevitable if they did not change their behavior toward Winkler. As far as he was justified in doing so, he enlightened them about the Willberg affair, assuring them that George had behaved in such a blameless manner that he might serve as an example to others. At first the commander intended to send a delegation of three lieutenants to George, to convey to him an expression of confidence on behalf of their comrades, and to ask his forgiveness for their unjust suspicions. In a long conversation with his aide-de camp, the question was considered whether definite satisfaction was not due to George. The aide-de camp had persuaded him that to go too far would result in more harm than good. If the commander were to insist on an official apology by the others, their excited minds would not be calmed, but only irritated anew. Anger would burst again into flame, the pilgrimage of penitence would be felt a great humiliation, the more so because George was only "Cuerger-

lich." It would always be painful for the nobility to own to a "Buergerlicher": I have wronged you. The colonel finally accepted that view. So he only addressed the officers with great emphasis, closing with the words: "I have ordered Count Wettborn to report to me daily how you behave toward Winkler. If I hear of a single complaint, if I learn that any one of you does not conduct himself in the future as I desire, I shall see to it that the party concerned will find himself within three days in a frontier garrison. My word upon that."

That brought relief, at least in so far that thereafter the comrades no longer dared to offend Winkler openly or to talk about him irritatingly. Their sentiments had not changed nor grown more amiable because of the commander's censure, but they kept their own counsel and maintained a kind of outward courtesy toward George without becoming really friendly. What was offered to George in the way of comradeship was little enough, yet it was more than he had dared to hope after his recent experiences. The present behavior of his comrades filled him with a certain satisfaction. In his good nature he almost regretted that the gentlemen had to listen for his sake to so much severe admonition. In his demeanor and in his association with them he did not betray his thoughts. He remained courteous and amiable, just as he had been from the beginning. He took pains to act as if he had not the remotest inkling of the transactions during the officers' meeting. Officially he knew nothing about it, for Count Wettborn did not deem it proper to give

him direct information as to how the other gentlemen had been harangued for his sake. That would have been too much like a humiliation of the nobility before the "Buergerlicher" class. George continued to play the rôle of the man who did not know. He did not refer to the mistrust they had shown him before; he did not cherish any resentment. He remained modest, he did not pose as a man brilliantly justified, or as a man who had been entirely cleared from unjust accusations, and whose adversaries had been put down with unrelenting censure. Upon the more sensible element among the officers George's wise behavior made a certain impression.

Though George in no way showed it, he noticed that a certain reversion of sentiment on his behalf was slowly taking place. He spoke to Olga about it. In the letters to his parents he reported that he would shortly be happy and contented. None too soon, for he had now been more than a year with the Yellow Butterflies. He felt he had become an entirely changed being. His naturally sunny temperament gained the upper hand again, his cheerful disposition threw off the dark thoughts which had lately crowded upon him.

He attended to his duties with more zest than before. His captain had gone away for a few days, the first lieutenant was likewise on furlough for a time, and since nothing of great consequence in the way of service was expected, George had been entrusted with the command of the company.

This morning the company had practiced target

shooting; then there was gun revision. At first George had left that service to the sergeant-major; but at the last moment he felt it his duty to be present. He appeared quite unexpectedly. The company stood drawn up in the corridor. As George ascended the stairs he heard from above such a loud cursing and scolding that he hastened his steps.

The shout: "The Herr Lieutenant is coming!" caused a dead silence. The sergeant-major hastened toward him to report.

"Sergeant-major, what is up? Don't you know how the captain insists on a good tone in the company? I should not like to make any change during his absence. What has happened?"

"Nothing, Herr Lieutenant. The Herr Lieutenant knows himself how the voice resounds in the corridor if one talks a little louder than usual. One has to do that in order to be understood at all. Possibly I may have spoken rudely to some fellow whose gun was not cleaned well."

"You had better not grow rude, but rather make a note of it and have the man present his gun again for inspection."

"Right, Herr Lieutenant."

George and the sergeant-major stood somewhat away from the company. Now he dismissed the sergeant-major: "Go on inspecting the guns."

The sergeant-major went back to his place and George walked slowly along the line, looking at the men's uniforms. Suddenly he stopped in front of a man: "Petersen, what have you been up to?"

The soldier's eye showed a heavy swelling, and his forehead a large bruise, which prevented him from wearing his cap in the proper position.

"You look horrible; how did it happen?" George asked.

"I fell, Herr Lieutenant."

"Where?"

"On the stairs."

"I always said you lame fellows could not even walk and still imagined that you could march in parade," George jested. Such harmless fun was usually appreciated by his men. They liked being teased a little about their own awkwardness. His words fell flat to-day; Petersen did not laugh, the comrades standing around did not move a muscle of their faces. George was struck by that, but for the moment did not consider it further. He turned to go, when he accidentally saw Corporal von Nissen, who stood in the window only three paces distant, looking at Petersen with eyes so threatening that even George started involuntarily.

In a flash he understood the whole case. The instinct which had prejudiced him from the beginning against that non-commissioned officer had not deceived him. The discovery occupied him to such an extent he did not clearly realize the consequences as he returned to the soldier and put him through a cross-examination: "When did you fall? Who was with you? Did you go to have your wound attended to by the hospital assistant? Who was there when you returned?" He could not get anything out of the man.

He had fallen. Nobody had seen it. He had not told anybody in order not to be laughed at for his awkwardness.

"What do you know about it, Corporal von Nissen?" said George, suddenly turning to the latter; "you are the corporal, you are responsible for your men. Why didn't you send the man to have his wound dressed? It looks horrible."

Von Nissen still looked at the man with burning eyes. "I don't know anything about it, Herr Lieutenant; I discovered the injury only just before the inspection, when it was too late to send him to the hospital assistant."

George knew the corporal lied, but from reasons of discipline and subordination he did not wish to charge him with falsehood in the presence of the men; so he took Petersen aside. "You show me the spot where you fell on the stairs."

A clever liar would have taken George somewhere and simply told him: Here is the place, Herr Lieutenant. But this soldier was not sufficiently versed in the art of dissimulation and hypocrisy. He did not know whether to go to the right or to the left. George took him in hand once more. "I'll tell you what, Petersen; you know me, and you know that I mean well to all of you, even closing an eye whenever possible. But if you tell me a pack of lies and make a fool of me now, I, too, can grow harsh and rude. I warrant you, you won't enjoy it, if you learn that side of my character. Out with it, I pledge you no harm shall come to you. Where did you fall?"

Petersen stood in inward struggle. At last he said: "I didn't fall at all."

"Instead—what has happened?"

"Corporal von Nissen struck me on the head with a cooking pot."

George was indignant, though he had not doubted from the beginning that the matter had come about in some such way. Even now he would not and could not betray his sentiments toward his subordinate; so he only said: "That's it? All right, step back to the ranks."

The man remained standing at attention before his lieutenant without stirring.

"Have you something else on your mind?" George asked. "You know, Petersen, you are not permitted under the rules to make a complaint against the corporal to-day. Only to-morrow you may do that. Otherwise you yourself are liable to punishment."

"Right, Herr Lieutenant; I do not wish to make a complaint."

"What else do you want?"

The soldier, a big, strong, sturdy fellow, was trembling all over.

"Speak up, man; you may have confidence in me. What else do you want?"

"I should like to beg the Lieutenant humbly, not to tell the corporal I told the truth to the Herr Lieutenant, else the corporal will thrash me this evening, and will compel the comrades to strike me with their whips."

Involuntarily George moved back a step. "How do you come to say that? That's only your imagination. How can you insinuate such a thing about your superior?" He spoke against his own conviction, but the interests of the service required him even now to defend the superior. Later on there would be occasion to bring the whole truth to the light of day.

Petersen still trembled. "We know the Herr Corporal thoroughly. Last week Private Meyer wanted to complain because the Herr Corporal knocked out two of his teeth. The corporal learned of it and struck him with the whip until the blood began to flow; and we had to assist in striking the poor fellow."

"How could you do such a thing?"

"The Herr Corporal threatened us he would see we got no Sunday leave. He teased and plagued us until at last we got enraged and struck at Meyer again and again, until he could no longer move."

"Well, and then?" George inquired, hardly able to contain himself in his indignation.

"Then the Herr Corporal fetched an old Bible and Meyer had to swear on the Bible that he would not make a complaint. The Herr Corporal told Meyer that if he complained now he would be a perjurer and be sent to state's prison for false swearing."

George was beside himself at what he heard; yet he said with apparent composure: "It is well. Step back to the ranks."

Still Petersen remained standing, and asked with

tears in his voice, "The Herr Lieutenant will surely not say anything to the Herr Corporal?"

"I can't promise that, but I warrant you that Corporal von Nissen will do no bodily injury to you this evening. He won't harm you any more. Are you satisfied?"

Petersen shook his head. "Then the other non-commissioned officers will do it. They are all in with the Herr Corporal. They are not all as bad, but they all strike us."

George did not seem to have heard the last words. "Calm yourself. Nothing will happen to you to-day. I myself shall remain in the barracks all night watching out. I hope you are satisfied."

"Very well, Herr Lieutenant."

Petersen stepped back to the ranks, and George, too, was on the point of returning to the company when he saw Corporal von Nissen standing nearby, evidently waiting for the moment when he could have speech with him. As soon as George was alone, the corporal advanced toward him.

"What do you want with me?" George asked, curtly.

Nissen tried in vain to hide his disquiet and anxiety, his restless eyes wandering more than usual.

"What do you want?" George repeated.

The corporal made an unsuccessful effort to control his voice; it was perceptibly unsteady when he spoke: "I only wanted to beg the Herr Lieutenant humbly—I can imagine what Petersen told the Herr Lieutenant—I wish to beg him humbly not to believe Peter-

sen. He is the biggest liar and slanderer in the company. The Herr Captain knows it. He has given me orders to keep an eye on Petersen, who is a social democrat in disguise. His comrades know it. The Herr Lieutenant may ask the whole company. They all will tell him the same thing: Petersen lies."

George's face showed contempt. Petersen's every word proved clearly that he told the truth. While George was talking to the private, Nissen was busy influencing his men and threatening them with more violence if they would not represent Petersen as a liar. A sense of immense disgust and loathing for the corporal who could lay hands on a defenceless inferior filled George; he despised him most of all for the effort to lie out of his guilt when caught. So he said: "Not merely vulgar and despicable, but cowardly too? Pfui!"

The corporal grew pale, but made another effort to clear himself. "The Herr Lieutenant knows how the Herr Captain thinks of me; the Herr Captain has told the Herr Lieutenant himself. When the Herr Captain returns from his furlough he will speak to the Herr Lieutenant about me, then the Herr Lieutenant will perceive that he is wronging me greatly."

The infamous character of these hints was plain enough to George. He was reminded of the morning when the Captain had spoken rudely to him for the sake of this same corporal. He could perceive distinctly how Nissen looked forward with secret joy to the day when George would be rebuked a second time for doubting a splendid corporal. The veins

on George's forehead began to swell with anger. He controlled himself with a great effort. "Corporal von Nissen, whether I wrong you or not will be determined later on. For the present time you appear to me as more than suspected of repeated ill-treatment of your inferiors."

Nissen tried to defend himself again, when the sergeant-major appeared and reported that the inspection of the guns was finished.

"Good you are here, Sergeant-Major," George turned to him, and added with a clear, firm voice: "Sergeant-Major, take off the sword of Corporal von Nissen and lead him to prison as an accused."

The corporal grew pale and staggered back.

"Well, Sergeant-Major, why don't you proceed?" George asked, as the other hesitated to carry out the order, "didn't you understand me?"

"At your service, Herr Lieutenant," the sergeant-major answered, with hesitation, "I only thought of what the Herr Captain would say on learning of it."

Involuntarily George laid his hand on his sword. "Donnerwetter, Sergeant-Major, do I command the company or do you? I want your answer."

"The Herr Lieutenant."

"It is well you perceive that. You now either place the corporal under arrest, or else I punish you for disobedience of orders."

Such energetic language had its effect. The sergeant-major offered no further resistance. "Take off your sword, Corporal von Nissen."

The latter mechanically uncoupled his belt and let his sword drop to the ground.

The sergeant-major picked it up. "Come along."

With shaking knees, without raising his eyes again, the corporal descended the stairs with the sergeant-major. A moment later George saw the two walk across the courtyard. Then both disappeared in the military jail, situated in the farthermost right-hand corner of the great courtyard of the barracks.

George began to realize what he had done. For a second doubts rose within him whether after all he had not acted rashly, without due consideration. He called Private Meyer, told him the story as Petersen had given it, and asked him upon his honor and conscience whether it was true.

"Did you have to swear?"

"Yes, Herr Lieutenant."

"Were you beaten?"

"I can still show it to the Herr Lieutenant."

Evidently the men had seen that the corporal had been taken to jail, else they would not have dared to speak so freely.

"Show it to me."

The man took off his breeches. His body showed plainly large blue welts filled with blood, raised by the strokes of the whips.

"That's enough."

The man dressed again. In spite of the traces of cruel ill-treatment he had thus found, George had a sensation almost of joy. It was plain he had not

wronged the corporal, whose guilt was clearly established.

Soon the sergeant-major returned. "Order is executed."

"Thanks. Let the men disband, I only want to speak to the non-commissioned officers."

A moment later they stood before the lieutenant in a semi-circle. George let them stand at attention purposely in order to give more emphasis to what he had to say. "Let me inform you first that I have sent Corporal von Nissen to jail for flagrant ill-treatment of his subordinates. As usual, this came to light to-day through an accident only. If I had remained away from the Appell, as I originally intended, I should probably never have known anything about it. This infamous business—such incredible doings can't be called otherwise—would have gone on without interference. Hints have come to me that many non-commissioned officers are in the same boat with von Nissen. I don't know whether that means you knew of his ill-treatment of soldiers without reporting the facts, or whether you, too, have laid hands on your men. I do not propose to investigate any further for the present. That will be the business of the court later on. To-day I only wish to say to you that each of you who does not feel entirely free from guilt ought to be ashamed of himself from the bottom of his heart. I am the last man to find fault with an officer who is so carried away by anger at the stupidity or obstinacy of a subordinate as to strike or push a single time. It ought not to be done, cer-

tainly, but we are all human and liable to forget ourselves occasionally. Our men know it and don't take amiss a blow they receive in consequence of sudden irritation. They know no real harm is meant. They also know that later on, when they are ordered to drill recruits, they may poke a man's ribs once in a while without meaning real harm. But there is an immense difference between forgetting himself in the zeal of duty and deliberate and cold-blooded ill-treatment of subordinates. The first is human, the second contemptible. Corporal von Nissen and every other man guilty of such offences will be punished according to his deserts. Now I want to speak to you briefly about another matter. I have been informed that the men fear being alone with you to-night at the barracks. They apprehend you might take your revenge on them because I sent Corporal von Nissen to jail. It is a fine testimony for you that the men are afraid instead of having confidence in you. You have every reason to be proud of it."

These words were surcharged with irony, and George continued: "I will assume for your sake that those fears are without cause. I have promised that none among you will lay hands on a man. Therefore I order the sergeant-major and the vice-sergeant-major to patrol the quarters of the men steadily from now on until bedtime, and to relieve each other every two hours. All doors must remain open the whole night. At nine o'clock I myself shall be on watch. That's what I wished to tell you."

The non-commissioned officers were dismissed.

While he was speaking George had scrutinized their faces carefully. Many of them had changed color, some of them endeavored to act as if the whole matter did not concern them, as if they felt free of any guilt. But he had the impression that only a few of them had an absolutely clear conscience.

Accompanied by the sergeant-major, George went to the office of the company to prepare his report about Corporal von Nissen and to hand the document over to the battalion. It would then be forwarded to the regiment, and, considering the gravity of the case, would reach superiors higher up. George had sent away the private detailed to work as clerk, and now turned to the sergeant-major. He was horrified over what he had seen and heard, and spoke frankly. "Tell me, Sergeant-Major, how can such a thing be possible? How is it thinkable that such doings can go on for weeks without anybody knowing of it? Did you never know anything of it? You live with the men on the same corridor, you must have passed through the rooms many times, by day as well as in the evening. Did you never notice anything suspicious?"

For answer the sergeant-major shrugged his shoulders.

"What does that imply?" George asked. "You don't mean to say that the whole thing is entirely new to you?"

"Not exactly that," the sergeant-major replied, after a moment. "Since the matter will have to come up any way, I may as well talk reasonably. I shall be

called as a witness in the investigation, and I must tell under oath all I know."

"And what do you know?"

"Strictly speaking, not much, Herr Lieutenant. I can swear with a clear conscience that I never saw or heard anything. I can also swear no man ever came to me to make a complaint. None ever wanted to complain officially. I myself should have been liable to punishment had I suppressed a matter of complaint reported to me in the course of duty without forwarding it to the higher authorities."

"Certainly; and you have an entirely clear conscience?"

The sergeant-major meditated for a moment. "I do believe, Herr Lieutenant, the court cannot do anything to me. That's the main thing for an old soldier who will complete his twelve years of service within a few months and will then be entitled to an allowance of a thousand marks and to a place in the government civil service."

"It seems the main thing as far as the outside world is concerned," said George. "Still your words indicate that you do not feel entirely guiltless in your conscience."

"I believe I do, Herr Lieutenant. As I said, I never saw or heard anything, but I had my misgivings that everything was not right with the men under Corporal von Nissen. Ever so many times one of his men either fell and injured himself, or ran up in the darkness against some object and was hurt. I had Nissen before me and asked him: 'You don't

beat your men?" Of course he always answered in the negative. I might have taken an oath that he was lying, but what could I do? Should I interrogate the men behind the corporal's back? Perhaps that might have been the best thing to do, but discipline and subordination are giving way dreadfully even without such action. Good Lord, in former days you could do anything with the fellows. You could twist them around your little finger, but now it's enough to make an old soldier shed tears. What little authority we have saved in spite of biennial service is undermined and destroyed by the newspapers with their d—— talk about the degrading treatment of subordinates. Under such conditions, you can't blame an old soldier for not doing more than is absolutely required of him toward bringing such stories to light."

George partly assented. "Yet it is hardly right."

"I know, Herr Lieutenant, but what good would it have done to me had I reported the matter officially when I myself had no official knowledge of it? My capitulation would not have been renewed, I should not have received my thousand marks, and I would have been left to look out for my own future. It would not have meant official punishment for me that my capitulation was not renewed. On the contrary, I should have received faint official praise. But none of my superiors would have thanked me for forcing the discussion of these matters without being absolutely compelled to take such action."

George could only agree with the sergeant-major,

and for the first time the thought struck him: "How will you be thanked for reporting this scandal?"

"I am a married man," the sergeant-major continued; "the Herr Lieutenant knows I have two children. One does not like to be thrown into the street suddenly with his family. It is horribly hard for fellows like me to find suitable employment. Old non-commissioned officers with their certificates for civil service often run around for a year and a day in idleness because every calling is crowded. Therefore one stays in the service as long as possible, instead of twelve years, twenty, and sometimes longer. There is, at least, the position, the salary, the quarters. All that is not to be jeopardized without absolute compulsion. In self-interest and in the interest of one's existence one must close an eye wherever possible. It was possible in my case."

"Did you ever speak to the Herr Captain about Nissen?"

"Often enough, Herr Lieutenant. Repeatedly I hinted to him that it seemed to me as if Nissen did not treat his men right."

"And what did the Herr Captain reply?" George asked eagerly.

"The first time he laughed at me, later on he grew rude to me. The Herr Lieutenant knows that Nissen is to become sergeant-major later on; so that the captain thought I was already jealous of my successor. I really had no cause for that, since Nissen must first become a sergeant, then a vice-sergeant-major, before he can take my place or that of any of my

colleagues. I explained that to the captain, but he still thought I was jealous, particularly because he, the captain, favored Nissen. He admonished me to regard Nissen with just eyes, and not always to find fault with him. After that I held my peace. Only once did I again speak to the captain, calling attention to a man's reddened cheek that showed plainly the slap the fellow had received. Of course he was one of Nissen's men."

"Did the Herr Captain take the corporal to account?"

"I don't think so, Herr Lieutenant. The Herr Captain only asked me whether I had never boxed a man's ears. Well, I couldn't swear to that, whereupon the captain said I should not complain to him about Nissen for an act I had once committed myself."

George grew meditative. "Pray tell me, Sergeant-Major, do you believe the Herr Captain knew how Nissen treated his men?"

"Not exactly that, Herr Lieutenant, for Nissen was always very cautious. He rarely struck the men in the face; externally the ill-treatment never showed. I cannot understand how he could be so careless to-day and be carried away to such an extent as to strike Petersen on the head. No, I don't believe the captain knew anything about it, but I often wondered that he granted Nissen so much power over the men. If one of them had to report for punishment, or the like, he had always to report to Nissen. I once complained about it to the Herr Captain. I am the sergeant-

major, and could not tolerate silently such infringements of my rights and duties. It looked as if the Herr Captain mistrusted me. But the Herr Captain said I should not make myself ridiculous. Didn't I know how much he thought of me? Didn't I have work enough? He had made the arrangement solely to ease my duties and to relieve me of a portion thereof. Thereupon I said to the captain there was a vice-sergeant-major and the sergeant; but the Herr Captain replied gruffly I had better leave it to him which non-commissioned officer he considered best qualified to act as my representative. It depended on the individuality of the parties concerned, not on their rank in the service."

"That's quite correct, for it always was a puzzle to me why the Herr Captain protected Nissen so."

"It's no puzzle to me, Herr Lieutenant. I have known the Herr Captain for many years. The Herr Captain is a good soul, but susceptible to flattery. Nissen understands that better than anybody else. He always danced attendance upon the captain like a regular courtier, trying to win his good graces. I am only curious to know what the Herr Captain will say when he returns from his furlough and learns the whole story."

"We must not let the captain wait so long for news. He commissioned me to telegraph him in case anything of importance should happen in the company during his absence. I almost forgot it. Please write down this dispatch: 'Had to send Corporal von Nissen to jail pending investigation for repeated

ill-treatment of subordinates.' " The sergeant-major wrote the dispatch and George took it to the telegraph office.

The next day at noon the captain returned from his furlough. Immediately after receiving the dispatch he interrupted his trip. He was in a state of irritation which George could not understand. Certainly the matter was unpleasant enough, but for all that the captain ought to be grateful to him for exposing existing conditions and putting an end to further ill-treatment. Instead of that, the superior was filled with boundless anger against George. Immediately after his return he summoned George from the barracks, and had a conversation with him during which George found it well-nigh impossible to control himself under the storm of reproaches with which the captain overwhelmed him. "I am certainly far from approving all that Nissen has done; but still less can I approve of your conduct, Herr Lieutenant. You ought to have notified me first. I should have returned forthwith and investigated the matter myself. It would have been time then to proceed against the corporal. I cannot withhold the reproach that you have acted hastily, without forethought. It almost looks to me as if you wished to show off your dignity as leader of a company, as if you had wished to boast. You knew how much I thought of Nissen. You should not have proceeded against him thus on your own motion out of regard for me, the less so since there was no compulsory motive for your action. It's an old saying that he

who asks many questions will get many replies. You might have waited to see whether Petersen or Meyer would make an official complaint. It would have been time enough then to act as you did. Possibly it might have been sufficient if you had summoned the corporal and talked to him, if you had threatened to report him in case he should repeat such an offence. Instead of that, you question and question to your heart's content until you finally know what you wanted to learn. You were always prejudiced against the corporal. Now you have assuaged your anger. Are you satisfied?"

George controlled himself with a great effort. "I should have proceeded against any other non-commissioned officer in precisely the same way."

The captain laughed so derisively that the blood rose to George's cheeks.

"I must respectfully request you, Herr Captain, not to doubt my word."

"I must emphatically remind you, Herr Lieutenant, not to call me to account. If what I told you does not please you, you have the right to make complaint."

"At your service, Herr Captain."

The captain paced the office like a raging animal. Then he stopped, his eyes bloodshot, in front of George who felt a shock. He hardly recognized his superior, the incarnation of calm and distinction.

"Herr Lieutenant, do you realize what you have done?" his superior growled. "I won't speak of the trouble you make for me. If you did not think of me,

you should have thought of the regiment and of yourself. The story of little Willberg is barely forgotten. You hardly escaped the suspicion of not having acted properly in that affair. Now you start a new story that will be taken up by all the newspapers. The whole press will attack us, the regiment will be talked of everywhere. The papers will sling mud and we shall have to endure it. If such a thing happens in any other part of the army it isn't so bad; but we, the regiments of the guard, must make sure that nothing finds its way into print which is not above reproach. The washing of dirty linen should take place in private, I repeat, it might well have been done in this case. The matter might have been disposed of by a severe rebuke, and only the higher superiors would have known it. You have prevented that by handing in your report so hastily. Now the battalion must send the matter higher up, and a public scandal is inevitable. That isn't all; His Majesty, too, will hear of the proceedings, and will hardly approve your behavior in spite of the high favor in which you are held."

"I beg pardon, if I have to contradict the Herr Captain; I know precisely what His Majesty thinks about the ill-treatment of soldiers."

"So do I," the superior shouted, "but it isn't necessary to make a mountain out of a molehill, to stir up mud by thoughtlessness."

The blood mounted to George's cheeks. "I am conscious of no guilt. If my action was wrong, I shall know how to bear the consequences."

The captain's face flushed also. "You will have to do that, in any case. That helps neither me nor the regiment. It's entirely immaterial to us whether you are dismissed or not. We have lived without you before, and can do so again in the future. But your dismissal by no means disposes of this matter."

"Possibly it may be disposed of by strict and impartial punishment of the guilty man. If the public sees that such behavior must be severely expiated the scandal will calm down quickly."

"You believe that?" the captain sneered. "Well, you will have occasion enough to explain and justify your conduct in this affair."

George was astonished and indignant at this unjust treatment. He was firmly resolved to offer complaint about it. He changed his mind the next morning when he was called to the office of the battalion and that of the regiment. There also indescribable excitement prevailed. Though his conduct and his strict sense of justice were praised *pro forma*, he had to hear things he did not expect.

"You should have realized that the public and possibly the corps will not stop with the corporal. They will ask: "How was such a thing possible? Could it have happened had there been sufficient supervision on the part of the higher officers? You, as lieutenant, should know such supervision means only that we constantly admonish the non-commisioned officers not to lay hands on their men, that we remind them of the consequences following the opposite course. We cannot be tied to every non-com-

missioned officer. We can't be always inspecting the men's quarters by day and night. We can't do more than we are doing to prevent such ill-treatment. In spite of that, we, the superiors, are held directly responsible. You will see how this affair will end."

The remarks of his superiors showed plainly their anxiety for their own existence. Involuntarily George recalled the utterance of a captain in his old regiment: "The ill-treatment of soldiers will cease only when changes are made in two directions. In the first place the superiors must not be goaded by their superiors, and the captain and the major must know that an unfortunate inspection will not necessarily break them. At present they look forward to the appearance of an Excellency with fear and trembling. In order to pass the inspection with some show of success, they keep on drilling and drilling. The major scolds the captain, the captain scolds the lieutenants, and they in turn the non-commissioned officers. The rudeness increases from grade to grade downward. The non-commissioned officers would have to be angels if they did not wreak their rage upon the men who, after all, though indirectly, are the cause of the trouble. If Hanson carries his gun improperly, the captain is blamed for not emphasizing sufficiently the proper carriage of the guns in his company. Of course the censure is unjust, as the higher superior knows full well. That doesn't matter, the main thing is that the captain should get worked up and show his energy. To-day nobody really cares for the education of the army. Each struggles for his

own existence. Each feels threatened daily with dismissal, for a thousand different reasons. In order to avoid that as long as possible, constant injustices are committed against the subordinates of every grade. The road to advancement nowadays passes over corpses. This will change only when we cease to live in an epoch of inspections, when we no longer work merely for ourselves, but for the whole army.

“Then feelings will be calmed again. We shall no longer attempt to accomplish with blows and ill-treatment what might be achieved quicker and better by kindness.

“That is one point. The second is that ill-treatment will only cease when the superiors have courage to take up all complaints and to punish what they observe, either themselves, or by reporting the guilty party for punishment higher up. Naturally such courage is found only in a man who is either very rich, and therefore finds it immaterial whether he draws full salary or a pension, or with a man who stands exceptionally well with his higher superiors, and therefore says to himself: ‘It won’t interfere with my career if the misdeeds of my non-commissioned officers become known, since I myself am entirely innocent in the matter.’

“But the man who trembles and shivers for his future naturally says to himself: ‘My position is shaky anyway. If it should become known that my non-commissioned officers beat their men, I may as well get my civilian suit ready.’ Who can find fault with a poor captain or a poor major for not forward-

ing a complaint, or for simply admonishing an officer whom he has caught beating his men instead of meting out prompt punishment to the offender?"

On that occasion George had agreed with his captain. Yet now he could not quite understand why his superiors should be annoyed, because he had called their attention to such marked brutalities.

"I can hear," said the colonel, "His Majesty saying to me: 'First the affair with Willberg, now this still greater scandal with the non-commissioned officers. There are nice conditions in your regiment.'" Then the commander added: "If the affair breaks my neck you are the cause of it, nobody but you; I would not have believed you would get us into such a mess."

George distinctly understood the colonel expected, on the score of gratitude for having taken his part recently, that he would have showed more regard for the reputation of his regiment. Still George was not conscious of any guilt. An inner voice told him that he had only acted as an honorable man must.

Not only his superiors, but his comrades took it amiss that he reported the matter higher in official form. Not that they supported the corporal. On the contrary, there were exclamations of general indignation when George told of the physical condition of the victims. Still the officers felt that the good reputation of the regiment was of more consequence to them than the well-being of the common soldiers.

First there had been the affair among the officers themselves, now the scandal with the non-commissioned officers—they found themselves in a fine fix.

Of course the verdict would be: "Nice goings-on with the Yellow Butterflies; the lieutenants shoot themselves, the non-commissioned officers beat their men black and blue."

George noticed, too, that they felt it doubly disagreeable because he, the only "Buergerlicher" among them, had made the disclosures about the misdeeds in the company.

Thereafter he had a terrible time. His position was shaken, his official life hardly endurable. His captain treated him with a contempt which made it scarcely possible for him to maintain his composure. The first lieutenant, Freiherr von Masemann, assisted his captain to the best of his ability. The Freiherr shared his superior's views and considered it more than ever his duty to educate George and to play the schoolmaster toward him.

Meanwhile the investigation had been started, and followed its regular course. The first hearing of the accused had taken place. In view of the gravity of the charges, the matter had to be submitted to the higher authority of the division. Hearings took place daily, and half the company was constantly on the way to the court-room. Only too soon the whole extent of the abuses became plain. Among the men under Corporal von Nissen there was hardly one who had not been beaten by him. The corporal's assistants had aided him in every way in the ill-treatment and torture of the privates, induced to such course by illegal favors shown to them by the corporal. Other corporals had behaved as badly as von Nissen, others

again had misbehaved in a lesser degree. They all had the same explanation to offer. "The Herr Captain forbade us scolding and verbal abuse; he threatened us with the annulment of our capitulations in case we should violate his commands. We were not permitted to talk roughly to the men. If we reported a private for laziness or some other reason, he was never punished, but merely admonished to do his duty in the future. We all know the Herr Captain had the ambition to prove that he could command a company without ever decreeing a punishment."

The company's records of punishment are handed over to the regiment and to the division regularly. According to the views of the higher superiors, that company is the best which can show the smallest number of penalties imposed. Those records have wrought no end of evil, they are the stumbling-blocks of the officers.

Undoubtedly there should be supervision on the part of the higher officers; only it should not be exercised as now. It is not easy to determine from a seat at a desk whether a captain acted correctly when he imposed three days' arrest upon a man. Consider also the principle before mentioned. "That company is the best which has the smallest number of punishments." No saying is more fallacious than this. None leads to so much undue leniency toward the subordinates. This view of the higher superiors almost compels a captain to close eyes and ears, to see nothing and to hear nothing, so as not to be obliged to impose penalties.

Herr von Warnow obviously did not wish to punish any one. That was clearly established by the testimony of all the witnesses. He wanted to have the best company, not because of exaggerated military ambition but solely because of his refinement. Men who had been punished became distasteful to him individually, he could not bear them. A private of the guard might be rebuked sometimes, but never sent to confinement. Thus confinement sentences had become rarer and rarer in the company. The non-commisioned officers could not get the support of their captain, in consequence of this noble theory which did not always answer the practical requirements of the service. The captain demanded a great deal of his non-commisioned officers; his soldiers were to be the best in every respect. Such results could not be accomplished by kindness. The men were not punished. Cursing and scolding was prohibited, to look at a man crossly resulted in the admonition to treat him decently. What remained then for the non-commisioned officers but to seek their own relief? Not during the official service, but afterward they wreaked their vengeance on the men.

If a man drilled badly, it was first reported to the captain with a request to make the fellow undergo additional exercises; but the captain held that in a decent company this was unnecessary. That irritated the non-commisioned officers, who said to themselves: "The fellows simply laugh at us if we report them for punishment, they know it amounts to nothing. So they ordered the men on extra drill. They ordered

them up in their rooms behind closed doors and tortured them as much as they could. There were cuffs and blows in plenty. If any one betrayed by look or mien that he intended not to endure such treatment, he was brutally beaten until he gave up every idea of complaint. Frequently the men had to get up at night and drill in the rooms, dressed only in their shirts. The man that didn't exercise properly was beaten with a whip until blood flowed.

A sad condition of affairs was revealed. The whole company, including the officers, had to appear as witnesses. Both lieutenants, Freiherr von Masemann and Winkler, stated under oath that they had no inkling of the abuses, that they had never heard of a complaint, never noticed or heard of anything suspicious while inspecting the men's quarters.

The interrogatory of Captain von Warnow resulted differently. He had to admit that the depositions of the sergeant-major were correct. He had also to admit that his attention had been called repeatedly to the actions of Corporal von Nissen, and that he had paid no attention to such warnings. As his reason for so doing he could only say that Nissen had been most sympathetic to him, that he should never have suspected him of such treatment of his men. He had nothing further to offer in extenuation of his conduct.

“ Didn't you know, Herr Captain, it was your duty to investigate whether the accusations against the corporal had any foundation in fact? ” asked the auditor who conducted the investigation.

Captain von Warnow drew himself up proudly. "I believe I have done my duty in every respect, I have always admonished my non-commissioned officers to treat their men decently."

The auditor took that answer down, and said: "Corporal von Nissen offers as his excuse that you, Herr Captain, directly ordered him to deal with the crooked and the stupid ones, as he expressed himself, singly. He thinks that gave him the right to order the men on extra drill. He alleges that only his zeal for the service, his consciousness of responsibility for the confidence shown him caused him to strike the men. May I ask you how you came to grant such a young non-commissioned officer so much power? According to my conception, you, Herr Captain, thereby gave to the corporal occasion and motive for his ill-treatment of the soldiers."

"That may be your idea, Herr Auditor. I selected this non-commissioned officer because he seemed to me, on account of his education, the best qualified in every respect."

"Did it never strike you that von Nissen's men in particular were frequently lame or marched poorly? Did you never inquire what ailed them? Did you never try to learn whether the many falls of which the men spoke actually happened? Especially at the present time when so many cases of ill-treatment are occurring, you should have inquired why so many injuries took place among Nissen's men."

Herr von Warnow listened to the auditor in amazement: "It seems as if you were trying to hold me

responsible for the whole affair, though only indirectly. I must emphatically protest against that."

The auditor looked at the captain firmly. "I am certainly of the opinion that you are to blame in so far as you did not exercise sufficient supervision over your non-commissioned officers. I consider it my duty to embody that in the record."

The consequence was that a charge was preferred against Captain von Warnow for being indirectly responsible for the abuses, because of insufficient supervision of his non-commissioned officers.

Captain von Warnow was suspended from service, and Freiherr von Masemann entrusted with the command of the company. It was the sensation of the day. They were all beyond themselves, but nobody was stunned by the news more than George. He had not wished, he had not expected that his report would have such consequences. According to the surmises expressed at the casino, Herr von Warnow was likely to get four weeks' confinement to his quarters; possibly he would be obliged to leave the army. At all events, he could no longer stay with the regiment. Again the whole wave of anger turned against George as the cause of the whole misfortune. He suffered terribly under the silent accusations of the others. He retired almost completely from intercourse with his comrades. He was in no mood to frequent social affairs. What should he do there? As long as the investigation against his captain was pending, the latter could not go to entertainments, and the consequence was that his wife and niece did not go out.

So George was deprived of the chance of speaking with Hildegarde, thought just at that time he wished particularly to see her and to learn from her own lips whether she also condemned him for having caused her relatives trouble.

X.

Sentence had been pronounced. Corporal von Nissen was to be degraded and imprisoned for eighteen months. Four more non-commissioned officers of the company were sentenced to six months' imprisonment each. A few days later the court martial found against Captain von Warnow a sentence of four weeks' confinement in a fortress for insufficient supervision of his non-commissioned officers, whereby he indirectly caused the ill-treatment of their subordinates.

The Yellow Butterflies glided about completely crushed. All merriment had died out at the casino. The officers scarcely dared to be waited on by the orderlies; what must they think of their superiors? If only publicity at the time had been prevented! A motion to the effect had been made, but did not prevail. The whole deadly affair was displayed in the newspapers. The press of all shades of opinion condemned the facts that came to light. There was talk of bringing the matter before the Reichstag. There were long dissertations upon the subject. What use were ordinances against the ill-treatment of soldiers if the superiors did not see that the ordinances were obeyed? In short, the papers were full of the matter day after day.

Nor was that the worst. His Majesty had ordered

a detailed report about the affair. He had asked for the records and sent to the officers and non-commisioned officers word in unmistakable fashion that they had lost his good-will and grace, and that it would take a long time to regain his confidence.

“We are taboo.” Somebody let that remark drop at table, and thereby hit the nail on the head. The Yellow Butterflies were taboo. They could see it by the way in which they were regarded in society, by the way in which the comrades of other swell regiments avoided them. In a manner as unobtrusive as possible, yet plainly noticeable to them. Not because of deep inner conviction! Not because the others felt indignant that such things should happen with the Yellow Butterflies! No, it wasn’t that. It didn’t concern them whether thrashing went on in the regiment or not. Why, it happened every day, particularly with the cavalry. There was hardly a riding exercise where the riding whip did not come into action. Thrashing took place all around, in one regiment a little more, in another a little less. So when the other officers officially kept somewhat aloof from the Yellow Butterflies, they did so with regard to publicity. It would make a good impression if their behavior toward the Butterflies were interpreted: “We are better men.” Added to that was the fact that His Majesty’s words had become public. Therefore sagacity required cool conduct toward the Yellow Butterflies. If His Majesty dropped the regiment, one could not very well treat it graciously.

The Yellow Butterflies were taboo. They noticed

it plainly when they held the first love feast after these sad occurrences. As usual, invitations had been extended to the comrades of other military bodies. Almost all declined; only a few young fellows for whom nobody cared in particular accepted.

Baron Gersbach, the Uhlan, did not come, although Count Wettborn personally went to see him, and guaranteed him a long gambling night. Still, Baron Gersbach insisted on declining the invitation.

“Don’t take it amiss, my dear Count, but conditions with you are not quite right. Too much has been in the papers. Who can guarantee that one of your men or one of the non-commissioned officers engaged in waiting on us, will not go to some paper afterward and tell them the fresh news of what we have done, and how we behaved. If one of your own lieutenants conjures up such a scandal by an indiscretion wholly out of place, we need not be astonished if your men do the same thing. I have no desire to figure in the papers. I am glad I got off so easily at the time Willberg disappeared from the face of the earth. Don’t take it amiss if I speak frankly. As long as you have characters like Winkler among you, we cannot associate with you.”

Count Wettborn tried in vain to defend George; he made no impression.

“Certainly he had the best of intentions,” said the Uhlan, “but intentions alone don’t always count. A sensible man must see what the consequences are. The consequences in this case you know better than I do. The whole affair is most unpleasant for us.

We regiments of the guard form a whole as it were; what happens in one, casts its shadow upon the others. The public does not say that such a thing happened with the Yellow Butterflies. It says: 'It happened with the guard.' That is horrible, for we more than others must insist on a good reputation with the outside world. Extraordinary demands are made upon us in regard to the service, consequently we may have to exercise extraordinary strictness toward our men. If then some idealist appears who wants to make the whole world happy, who wants to abolish corporal punishment, we find his ideas very beautiful in theory, but if he provokes such a public scandal, we simply cannot continue to associate with him."

The count had to leave without accomplishing his purpose. Thus far he had been the only one defending George from a sense of justice. Now he came to realize that Winkler could not remain in the regiment. One morning he spoke to the commander in this sense. "It won't do any longer, Herr Colonel, we are almost boycotted. We can't have any guests so long as Winkler is with us. He has brought discredit upon us, and upon himself. Formerly nothing could be urged against him, except his 'Buergerlicher descent; now the belief prevails among the corps of officers that he made his report solely because he is 'Buergerlich.'"

The commander looked up astonished. "How is that?"

"Pardon, Herr Colonel, the matter is simple

enough. The gentlemen believe that Winkler intended to avenge himself by his report for not having been treated by us with the cordial comradeship he expected. He meant to play us a trick and to show us: 'As the only 'Buergerlicher' among you, I am far more respectable than you. Solely not to bring discredit upon your regiment, and upon your noble names, you close your eyes and ears and tolerate the abuse of your men. I am more liberal, I am less permeated by the caste spirit which prompts you to preserve appearances. Therefore I act according to the dictates of my conscience. I am guided solely by my sense of duty.'

"That is sheer nonsense!" burst out the commander.

"Certainly, I would take my oath such thoughts never occurred to Winkler. But the comrades impute them to him. That cannot be helped. Nothing is more difficult than to talk them out of a view they have once firmly accepted. You know that better than I."

The colonel groaned. "The Lord knows what pains I took to bring the lieutenants to their senses."

He lighted his cigar and smoked furiously. "My dear Count, let me give you a bit of advice. If you are not pensioned off early, leave the army before you become colonel and commander of a regiment. I can tell you the path is not one of roses. The colonel is responsible for everything, for the education of the men, for their spirit, for the corps of non-commissioned officers, and last, but not least, for the lieu-

tenants. It's a dreary world. No, I will not be guilty of sinning," he corrected himself, "I have every reason to be grateful, because I would have taken an oath that I should never live to see this day as a soldier."

He eased his necktie with his hand, for he suddenly had a sensation as if somebody was trying to choke him to death.

He banged his fist on the table so furiously that the count, who had been engaged in admiring his own polished boots was startled. The colonel noticed it, but was not in the least concerned. "It is a scandal," he burst out, "We successfully navigated around two cliffs, only to encounter a third one called Winkler. God forgive me, but I wish he had never been born, or at least had never come to us. He has had little fun out of it, neither have we." The commander passed his right hand nervously over his thin hair. "It is easy for you to talk, dear Count, and to tell me: 'We shall regain our social standing only if we get rid of Winkler.' You called my attention to the intolerable conditions existing among the corps of officers, and you tell me there will be no change until we are rid of Winkler. Easily said; but how can it be done? It is impossible for me to request his transfer. If His Majesty finds out the true reason for my action; if His Majesty should have an inkling that there is a single man in the whole corps of officers who does not highly appreciate Winkler's action in reporting the abuses against the men, then—" the colonel shook himself— "We can't think of it, there

will be a crash, simply awful. I have told you before that His Majesty spoke of Winkler in terms of high praise and appreciation. If I were to tell him the man does not fit in our midst, we should have such a time that all the previous ungracious remarks of His Majesty would only be child's-play in comparison. I can't have that. With all the reverence for my gracious king, I say to myself: 'Don't go to your prince, unless you are called.' That's why I don't recommend Winkler's transfer, because if we are just we must admit there is nothing against him."

The count polished his monocle with deliberation, Then he remarked: "What the Herr Colonel just said, is perfectly true. I thought about it last evening, and I have come to the conclusion it would be better if Winkler's transfer did not originate with us. He himself must apply for it. If he does not wish to do that, he ought to be persuaded to take a year's furlough. Meantime he might consider the whole question and not don the uniform again. If he does don it again after all the experiences he has had with us, he will feel the desire to reenter not our regiment, but some other troop."

The colonel listened attentively, and nodded assent. "That might do, dear Count. That way out is not bad. Of course I should give the warmest support to his request for leave. There is no doubt it would be granted, considering how well disposed His Majesty is toward him. If we could only get him to hand in such a request."

"We can manage that, Herr Colonel, I shall talk to him as soon as I have the opportunity."

On the evening of the day when the commander and the count held this conversation about George's future, George conversed with Olga on the same subject. "I am tired of it, Olga, I shall remain here no longer. I am tired of storming the wall that divides me from the rest. I made up my mind today to hand in my resignation."

Lately Oglia had gone to George almost daily, and he had unbosomed himself to her with great freedom. She had foreseen that sooner or later it would come to this. Still she felt shocked at his words and tried to make him change his mind.

It was useless.

"At least ask for a transfer to another regiment," she begged.

George shook his head. "It is no use, child. I am sure I should not be sent to a miserable frontier garrison where one becomes an idiot. On the contrary, I should be sent to a city. What could I do there? I know I might play a rôle, to an extent, because I had been with the guard, though only for a short time. That counts for much in the provinces. Again, I am rich. For the latter reason alone, I should be highly welcome. All the world would be glad to borrow of me. I know that from my former garrison. In those small towns every newcomer of whom one may be able to borrow is celebrated and feted like a god. They all borrow, from the captain down to the youngest lieutenant. Even the ensign drinks himself into

a state of courage, and humbly begs the Herr Lieutenant to let him have twenty marks. I have been there. I never asked for a written acknowledgment on lending the money, but they always gave it without waiting for the request. In such matters they are punctilious about the form, but nobody ever redeemed his paper. All the documents are filed in my desk, a contribution to the history of the culture and ethics of lieutenants, a characterization of the 'first-class men.' ”

He rose, opened a drawer, and busied himself with the papers he took from a portfolio.

“ See, Olga, you needn’t read the names, they are of no interest to you. Here it says: ‘Hereby I pledge myself upon my word of honor to refund the amount of five hundred marks lent to me not later than within the next three months.’—‘Hereby I pledge my word of honor to refund the thousand marks lent to me to-day, the latest at’—so it goes through the whole bundle. Darling, I have dozens of them, dozens of unredeemed words of honor. Those who violated their pledges are strutting around in the world as proud officers.” He was silent for a moment, then said: “ The lieutenants are men entirely different from others. They form as it were a class by themselves. Their easy-going ways and their ideas on certain points are truly ingenious. I feel sure of one thing, that I do not understand those ‘first-class men,’ and because I don’t understand them, I have no excuse to offer for their actions, thoughts and sentiments. I am ready to forgive them what they did to me, though

it comes hard, but I can scarcely look on calmly when they pose so grandly before the world. There is hardly any class whose general cultivation is so meagre as that of the lieutenants; I could almost say they can't even read and write correctly."

"Oh, oh, George," Olga interposed, "one should not exaggerate, even in anger."

"I am not angry. I am only sorry to know how wretched conditions are with our corps of officers. Don't you believe I said too much just now. Granted our lieutenants can read; can they write? Will you look through the begging letters and the acknowledgments of debt I showed you a little while ago? You would find there specimens of style compared with which a schoolboy would appear as a profound scholar. That isn't all. You would also find an orthography that would bring public censure to a pupil in one of the lower classes of a grammar school. You laugh, Olga, but what I say is the truth. Of course, my remarks concern only the lieutenants, not the men of higher rank. Still I have frequently noticed how even the higher superiors were embarrassed if they were suddenly called upon to prepare a report. There was hesitation and hard work over every phrase. It was almost pitiable. In spite of all, in spite of the lack of elementary knowledge, such arrogance, such self-assertion! Every officer should be proud of his position and his calling, of course; but pride should not turn into a mania. In former years people were wont to speak of the young, well-educated, knightly lieutenants, the perfect noblemen. Where are they

now? Go about with a lantern looking for them! During my term of service I scarcely made the acquaintance of one. The few who come from the home of their parents fresh and natural, upon entering the army are soon affected by the caste spirit, soon filled with the devil of pride. Just ask the parents whose sons have become officers whether they are not often startled by the arrogance and the supercilious manner of the young fellows who deem the best just good enough for them; whether they have not often rued it bitterly that they allowed their sons to enter a calling which estranges them from their own parents, who become to them only a financial resource to supply the means for their expensive mode of life."

"George, you surely exaggerate," Olga expostulated.

"You think so? I can only tell you I have known young lieutenants who were ashamed that their fathers were school principals or something similar, but were by no means ashamed to draw money from home constantly in order to appear before the world in becoming style. They want to make it seem, in fact they think they must make it seem, as if they came from distinguished houses. I was present once and heard a lieutenant say his father was a pensioned officer, because he was ashamed to own the old gentleman was a practising physician."

"Pfui, that isn't nice."

Therefore it happened that Count Wettborn met no difficulties when he endeavored to persuade George to take a furlough. He was surprised when he

learned that George was firmly determined to hand in his resignation and to enter his father's factory; but, of course, he made no effort to bring Winkler to a change of mind.

"When do you expect to hand in your application?"

"Within a few days. My father wrote he was commanded to wait upon His Majesty, and I expect him here early next week. Although I am entirely master of my own actions, can stay or go as I please, I consider it my duty to inform my father first of my purpose."

"Certainly, certainly," Count Wettkorn assented. "A week sooner or later does not matter."

That was also the view of the comrades when they heard that Winkler intended to go. Whether he stayed a week longer or not made no difference. The main thing was that they would be rid of him.

"Boys, let us be a little nice to him during the last few days," said a comrade, "let us act as if we were sorry for his leaving us. After all, it isn't his fault that he in no wise fits in our circle. It will be advantageous for us if the memory of his last few days is a pleasant one to him. In his later life he will often tell of the time when he enjoyed the honor of belonging to us. Though it's quite immaterial what he may say about us to the circle of burghers with whom he will associate hereafter, it can't do us any harm if he says: 'The Yellow Butterflies are a d—— fine regiment; so easy and genial. They are charming

fellows, cherishing the spirit of comradeship better than any other regiment in the army.'"

The proposition met with little approval. "For his own sake he will never tell how we treated him and how we frightened him away."

At last they agreed to show no outward resentment during the short time remaining, but to behave with a certain formal courtesy.

Winkler could hardly suppress a derisive smile when he noticed the sudden change of sentiment toward him. Words of irony rose to his lips when the comrades inquired about his future plans, when they feigned interest in everything concerning him. Often he was tempted to exclaim: "Don't trouble yourselves, don't dissimulate, you can't hide your pleasure at getting rid of me," but he did not speak out. The officers would not own their true sentiments. What was the use?

Once at noon a comrade invited him to a glass of champagne. He had won a few hundred marks in the Prussian lottery, and obtained permission from the head of the table to celebrate the event properly. Winkler hardly trusted his ears when he heard the other say to him: "Won't you grant me the pleasure of drinking a glass of champagne with me?"

At first George felt like making a warm reply: "Since I have been here not a soul has shown me any friendliness, I decline it to-day." Anger and indignation rose within him that they should dare to extend an invitation to him now. Suddenly his humor gained the upper hand. He found the offer extremely

comical and accepted it with thanks. "Only on one condition," he said, following a sudden impulse, and speaking in a loud voice so that all must hear him, "On the day when I hand in my resignation, I should like to give to the officers a solemn farewell dinner. I can accept an invitation now only on condition that I shall have occasion to reciprocate. Won't you come," he turned to his host, "and you—and you—and you?"

He asked every one at the long table separately. Not one of them declined. They all thought the same thing. If it gives pleasure to him, why shouldn't we have a royal time at his expense? Since he is going to leave, it does not put us under any obligation.

When George had received all the acceptances, he felt a sensation almost of loathing for his comrades. Were they not ashamed to accept a kindness from the man they had treated so insultingly? He had not been in earnest with his invitation. He had counted on it as a certainty that each and every one of them would find some excuse for declining, and he had enjoyed in advance the variety of the excuses offered. But they had all accepted. Not only that, but the gentlemen inquired where and when the dinner would take place, hoping that it would not be at the casino. The rooms there were very nice, but otherwise—always the same kind of food. If there was to be a dinner, he had better arrange for it in one of the finest restaurants. He could afford it, one large bill more or less didn't matter anything to him. It was

to be hoped that the champagne would be genuine French.

“The other day I heard a brilliant *bon mot* about that,” said a comrade, “let me see what was it? Oh yes, ‘Pour for your guest German champagne and tell him it is French, it’s no use, he won’t drink it; but give him French champagne and tell him it is German, and drink it he will.’ Better mind that, Winkler.”

George promised to remember it, and to send out the invitations as soon as he had spoken to his father.

“When will your father come?”

George did not know himself. He expected him every day, and with him the Yellow Butterflies. They began to get restive, as the old gentleman delayed. What if he shouldn’t come at all? Perhaps it was only a pretense on the part of George to talk about his resignation, and thereby to bring about a change of sentiment. Perhaps the old man would appear only in a year and a day. Perhaps the whole affair was only a trick on the part of George to cheat the others and to make sport of them.

They were in a state of anxiety, and therefore all the more jubilant when George’s comrade, Freiherr von Masemann, said in the casino one day at noon: “The manufacturer of breeches buttons is here. I saw him last evening at a restaurant.”

A thanksgiving rose from every heart. Then came the question: “What does he look like?”

“Simply funny. The man wears a ready-made necktie, loose cuffs, and a pair of boots that show at

the first glance they have not been built at the capital. At table the man cuts the bread with a knife, instead of breaking it."

"Pfui Teufel!"

It was an outcry of sincerest indignation that passed along the line.

"Do stop," begged a young lieutenant, "consider, we have only just finished our dinner."

"Calm yourself," the Freiherr continued, "with all his faults, the old man has one good point."

"And that is?"

"He has a daughter."

"Ah, really? Winkler never told us anything about her."

They talked together surrounding the speaker.

"Pretty?" one asked at last. The others pressed still closer.

The Freiherr deliberately waited, and said at last: "Pretty? Boys, I can tell you, she is more than pretty, and though she comes from the provinces, she is dead stylish. You ought to see her figure, I can tell you—" he clacked with his tongue.

"Did you have yourself presented?"

"I regret, no. I happened to be at the restaurant with some acquaintances, and found no opportunity to disengage myself, but this evening it may be managed. I heard accidentally how the old manufacturer of breeches buttons arranged to have a table reserved for him to-day. The rest will be my business. Once I know the young lady, I shall conquer."

"In other words, that means you will try to catch the gold fish."

Freiherr von Masemann calmly lighted a cigarette. "Somebody will marry her, why shouldn't I be the man?"

"Very true; but do you believe that your coup will be successful?"

The Freiherr shrugged his shoulders. "Who knows? I can try. At the worst I may be refused. Why should the old man say no, once I have succeeded in turning the daughter's head? My family is without blemish. I myself am not any worse than the rest, and what few debts I have don't cut a great figure. The old man has got the means and may be glad to get an aristocratic son-in-law for his money."

The others agreed with him. What reason could there be why father and daughter should not receive the Freiherr with open arms? Some even considered the engagement a *fait accompli*.

"How do you stand with Winkler?" one of them asked.

"He may have a word to say about it."

"Our friendship is none too great," observed Masemann, "but Winkler may be glad if I become his brother-in-law. Thereby, he continues in some relation with our regiment. That is of great benefit and advantage to him. Just think what a position in society the man obtains, if he is able to say: 'My brother-in-law, the Freiherr von Masemann.' That will be to him almost as good as if he himself was a nobleman. Of course, I should keep my brother-in-

law at a distance as far as possible, I should know how to prevent him from overrunning my house. Well, that will be settled later on. We will try our luck this evening."

But the noble Freiherr had no luck that evening. He waited in vain for the Winklers. They were in George's quarters. The commercial councillor told of the audience he had with the King. He reported how His Majesty had graciously inquired after George, and expressed his satisfaction that George had acted so properly in the matter of the ill-treatment of the soldiers. Old Winkler reported how glad the King was to have only good words about George from the corps of officers, that he had learned with satisfaction how well George stood with his comrades, and how really sorry he, the King, was that unforeseen circumstances did not enable him to keep his promise to have him at table with him to-morrow.

"Didn't I always tell you so?" the old man concluded; "do you recollect how you wanted to give up the very first day? Who was right after all, you or I?"

George exchanged a quick glance with his sister with whom he had talked, informing her that he did not wish to spoil his father's pleasure on the first day of their reunion. He had also wished to prevent his father from talking to the King about his proposed resignation. He had kept his own counsel so far, now he must speak. His father's last words made it easy for him.

"What if I was right after all, Father? What if

now I am just as much a stranger in the regiment as I was at the beginning, if my position has been made worse by that which the King praised, if what the gentlemen told about my friendly relations with the comrades was a falsehood in order not to rouse the King's anger still more? What then?"

The father looked at his son with staring eyes. "I do not understand you."

"Then I will speak more plainly." He told at length how affairs had gone with him from the first day in the regiment, how it was expected he would resign, how he was determined to do it, not in order to please the Yellow Butterflies, but in order to have some pleasure in life again.

The old man listened with amazement. His fist came down upon the table. "If I forbid you to do it, if I command you to remain an officer?"

George looked at him calmly. "You won't command me to do that, Father. You yourself left it with me to quit any moment I chose. You will not take back your word."

"If I do, if I don't want you to let the others triumph in your defeat?"

"Then I shall go in any case, Father, I am of age and master of my own resolutions."

The old man lost his composure. "If I disinherit you?"

"Even then I shall go. I have saved enough to be able to live without care for the immediate future. As your son I shall find some occupation."

Again the father was on the point of exploding,

when Elsa interrupted the conversation, closely nestling to the old gentleman. "Give up your opposition," she begged; "George talked about it with me yesterday and to-day at length and with details. I too tried to make him change his mind, and failed. He feels far too unhappy as an officer. How can you wish to force him to endure the life any longer?"

The old man sat in silence a long time. "Mother will be beyond herself," he said at last.

Brother and sister exchanged a quick glance. They knew they had won, but they took good care not to give expression to their joy.

"Don't you find it hard to leave the army?"

"How should I, Father, after the innumerable humiliations I have endured? I doff the uniform gladly. With my ideas, I don't belong there, though I took pleasure in my duties."

"Is not every officer a soldier with his whole heart?" Elsa inquired.

George laughed aloud. "You innocent angel! I can assure you, half the lieutenants would resign forthwith if they were in a better position financially. The best proof of my assertion is that every lieutenant is looking around for a rich wife. Having found her, he either resigns immediately, or he stays only so long as he enjoys the service. If it becomes too wearisome for him, he throws the royal coat at the feet of his superior, and says: 'See how you will get along without me. Make other people crazy with your nerves.' Thank the Lord I am no longer obliged to submit to everything. Of course there are excep-

tions, the ambitious and those eager to succeed, those that dream of the red stripes on their pantaloons and of the title 'Excellency.' They may find it hard if some day they are obliged to go. Finally, there are certainly some who are officers body and soul, but their number is small. Where do you find them? Not in the lower grades. I hardly made the acquaintance of a single lieutenant who did not curse and swear about every matter of duty he was ordered to perform, who would have not preferred to resign, had he only known how to get a living. Harsh as it sounds, that is the truth. If a lieutenant says, 'I am glad I am an officer,' he refers to his social position. He scarcely ever feels that way because he enjoys the details of drilling. As with the lieutenant, so it is with the captain. There is no superior who does not harass him, make life a hell to him, hold him to account for every petty misdeed of his men. Under such circumstances, how can you expect joy in the service? It must inevitably die out. Such a poor captain pockets everything. He stays on because he must, because he has a wife and children and no money; because he finds himself under the cruel necessity of earning a higher pension in order to be able to live when old. He slaves and drudges from early morning until late in the evening. In most cases he fails to attain his goal, he ends by becoming a victim of misery and want. If it comes hard on him to take off the uniform, he sheds no tear for the service, but he weeps over his failure in life, because still in possession of all his mental and physical facul-

ties he finds himself doomed to inactivity and to eternal financial worries. You find joy in the service among the higher grades, but not among the lower ones, at least not among the infantry."

The father was in ill humor. He controlled himself as best he could, though from time to time his anger burst out, and George and his sister could only calm him with difficulty.

"Are you really going to hand in your resignation to-morrow? Won't you consider it for another four weeks? Hadn't you better first take furlough for a year or so?"

George shook his head. "I must go, Father, the sooner the better. My place is not among the officers with their more than singular views."

As if to confirm his words, the servant just then brought in a letter.

"Answer necessary?"

"No."

The servant left and George opened the note.

"What troubles you?" asked Elsa, who had observed him while he was reading the letter.

He sprang to his feet. "In my life I never encountered such impudence. Listen. Let me first remind you of the comrade from my regiment who sat in the same restaurant yesterday."

"Ah, the awkward youth who first did not know whether he ought to notice us at all, and afterward was shameless enough to try to flirt with me," said Elsa. "What about him?"

"Not much," George replied with apparent equan-

imity, "He only asks leave to apply for your hand."

Father and daughter looked at each other in amazement. At last Elsa burst into laughter, finally echoed by the rest. "He doesn't know me at all," she observed.

"That's by no means necessary. The noble Freiherr knows your finances. He knows you are a good catch, and that is enough for him. A man can live comfortably without love, but not without money. Listen, what the good soul writes. Let me tell you, though, that from the first there were few comrades with whom I was on such a bad footing as I was with him."

He read:

"My very dear Mr. Winkler:

"I sit lonely and deserted here in the restaurant. For an hour I have been looking impatiently toward the door through which I hoped to see you and your highly respected relatives enter. I was an accidental witness when your father yesterday ordered his table for this evening.

"You may have divined already without my saying it that I went to the restaurant to-day in the silent hope of being presented to your sister and to your highly respected father. I must confess openly that never yet did a young girl make so deep an impression upon me as your sister. Although I have only had the opportunity of observing her from a distance, still I have no doubt that in such a beautiful body

dwells a beautiful soul. I have only this desire, to be permitted to make her acquaintance. In consideration of the friendliness and true comradeship which has always existed between us, I ask for permission to wait to-morrow upon your respected relatives in order that you may present me to them. Of course I am at the disposal of your father at any moment with information about myself and my financial condition. Finally, I beg you not to take amiss what may be unusual in these lines; I know that your father is to stay only a few days, and I should not like your sister to leave the city without being allowed an opportunity to approach her.

“Begging you to present my kindest regards to your much-respected relatives, whom unfortunately I have not yet the honor to know, I remain, with sincere greetings, your always devoted

“FREIHERR VON MASEMANN.”

“What do you say to that?” said George.

“Is it possible!” exclaimed the old commercial councillor, “I must say I have experienced nothing like it in my life.”

“What do you say, Elsa?”

“I really don’t know whether to laugh or to feel vexed. What I should like to understand is whether he does not feel ashamed to write like that.”

George laughed with derision. “He ashamed? Elsa, do you know so little about a lieutenant? Why should he feel ashamed? Your beauty has struck his senses, still more the thought of your rich dower. He

cheerfully proceeds to the attack like Blucher at Waterloo. If he wins, it is well. If he meets with a refusal, he may try his luck elsewhere. By-and-by he will catch his gold-fish. The more impertinent such a fellow is, the easier he reaches the goal of his desires."

"Not with us!" the commercial councillor burst out. "Pray tell your most noble comrade from me to-morrow——"

George interrupted him. "Never mind, Father, I shall know how to answer, and my reply will not give him much joy. I shall ask him how it was that he couldn't associate with me, and yet proposes to marry my sister. In one sense, Elsa, it is a pity that you can't stay here a few days longer, for then the whole corps of officers would be at your little feet. From the oldest staff officer down to the youngest lieutenant, they would all court my favor in order to have in me a warm advocate with you. In the face of your millions, even the lieutenant who is proudest of his nobility and boasts forever of his ancestors would recognize the civilian class, and would condescend to name you as his noble consort."

"A fine company," the commercial councillor snorted.

"Thanks for the honor of being married for my money," said Elsa. "I believe I shall not marry at all."

George looked teasingly at his sister. "Oh, some day your heart will catch fire. That is as it should be. How old are you now? Nineteen or twenty?"

“Twenty-one.”

“And nobody has seriously wanted you so far?”

She laughed. “Oh, yes, like your comrade. Strangely enough those courting me were always officers, always lieutenants. The only lieutenant I love I cannot get.”

George listened with astonishment. “And why not?”

“Because he is my brother.”

Laughing, he drew his lovely sister to him. “Come, give me a kiss.” Then he continued: “In all seriousness, Elsa, you have grown more beautiful lately.”

He took pleasure looking at her, at her supple figure, her proud bearing, her blue eyes, her whole charming personality.

“Do you know you have much resemblance with Hildegarde?” he asked, suddenly.

It was the first time he had spoken her name to his relatives. Now that he had done it, he grew embarrassed under his sister’s glance.

His father, who had taken up the evening paper, laid it aside. “George, I am glad you speak of it. You wrote so much about your Hildegarde. Who and what is she, and how do you stand with her?”

George tried to avoid the subject, but Elsa insisted he should speak. “Do tell us something. In your letters you could never write enough about her, at least not at first. Lately you have had less to say. Did you have a falling out?”

“I don’t think so,” George said after some hesita-

tion, "at least I know of none. I wrote you that Hildegarde is a relative of my former captain, who is now serving his term of imprisonment in a fortress. Naturally, Frau von Warnow does not go out much at present. So I have seen Hildegarde only a few times at chance meetings on the street."

"Did you never speak to her?"

"Several times I was tempted to do so; but I should have been obliged to inquire how things were with the Warnows, and that would have been painful."

"How do you stand with her," his father inquired again. "You know your mother. She prophesied long ago you would become engaged. Is she right?"

"Since you ask me, Father, I must tell you that once I cherished that idea. I believe if this horrible affair had not happened, if we had seen each other oftener, matters would have come to a clear understanding between us. But——"

Elsa noticed the sadness in her brother's face, and inquired: "Won't you find it hard to leave without having seen her again?"

"I shall see her again," George replied with decision. "I have my leave-taking visits to make. I shall ask Hildegarde to name an hour when I shall be sure to meet her." Following a sudden impulse, he added: "Do you know, Elsa, I have told Hildegarde a great deal about you. I said you wished to make her acquaintance. She anticipates meeting you. Do me the favor to call on her; ask her to visit you at the hotel. Then I can come also, and when we see

each other again after our separation, we shall both realize what we feel for each other. If Hildegarde loves me, then——”

“Oho, don’t be so hasty, my son,” said the old man, “don’t forget me. I wish to have a look at my future daughter-in-law before I say Amen.”

Hildegarde’s picture suddenly stood clear and distinct before George’s eyes. Now that he spoke of her, memory roused in him a great yearning to meet her anew.

“Hildegarde will please you, Father, she is beautiful and intelligent. She has not the peculiar views of her class concerning nobility. I have told her much of you, about your factory, about your care for your workmen, about your activity. For all this she has interest and understanding.” He spoke of her with fire and warmth that betrayed how much attached he was to her.

“What are the conditions of her family?” the father inquired. “You know, whether she has any money or not, is immaterial to me. You needn’t be concerned about that. What I mean is, do you know anything about her relatives? Has she any brothers and sisters? Who are her parents?”

George gave the information so far as he was able.

“Another good-for-nothing lieutenant,” the father growled. “The parents having no money let their boys become officers instead of making them turn to some useful calling. At home the family starves that the son may get drunk upon champagne at a love feast with his comrades.”

"Certainly Hildegarde is not responsible for that," George said. "What have I to do with her brother?"

"Oho!" The father straightened himself up. "A man marries not only his wife, but her whole family. Mind that, my boy. Therefore we must see clear before we come to any definite decision. One thing I will say frankly: 'I have long wished that you should marry. So marry whom you will, it is all the same to me. The main thing is that you love each other. We shall have to look at your Hildegarde.'"

XI.

“My son has just become engaged to your daughter. For Hildegarde’s sake, will try to help you and your son. Expect both of you at once for oral conference.”

This despatch from the old commercial councillor caused an indescribable sensation at the major’s house. Crying with joy, husband and wife sank into each other’s arms, and blessed the day Heaven had given Hildegarde to them.

“A good girl! A good girl!” the major praised her again and again. If anything marred his boundless joy, it was that his Hilda did not stand by his side. He would have liked to fold her in his arms, to pat her shoulder, and to say to her: “Girl, you have done well!”

He laughed boisterously, and lighted the most expensive cigar he had in the house. You must celebrate the festivals as they come, and this surely was his festival. Hildegarde engaged to the son of one of the richest industrial magnates! That was almost more than luck. Involuntarily, the major folded his hands and thanked the Lord for having given him such a rich son-in-law. Again and again he read the despatch, he couldn’t grasp the good news in its full significance. The oftener he read the

telegram and the more thoroughly he digested the message, the more he was struck by the words: "Will try for Hildegarde's sake to help you and your son. Expect both of you forthwith." What was the meaning of this "will try!" Did this "Buergerlicher" parvenu believe he, the major, would give his beautiful child, his only daughter, to the son of the manufacturer, without the latter going deep down in his pocket for it? Oho! If the commercial councillor was not going to pay all the debts of himself and his son, the engagement would be broken. He, as father, would refuse his consent. That would be a nice state of affairs if he was to give his child to the next best suitor without any compensation in return for her. No, that wouldn't do; such a thing could never come to pass.

His wife tried to calm him, but in talking the matter over with her, he only succeeded in talking himself into a greater state of anger. "You don't know the souls of those shopkeepers. They grow rich by haggling. Dirty avarice is their main quality, as you can see here. Would a decent man think of asking the question how many debts the father and the brother of his future daughter-in-law have contracted? He pays. That settles it. What does that mean: 'Expect both of you forthwith for conference?' The man ought to come to us, and to ask for the hand of our child with all proper formality. Instead of that, we are simply commanded to come to him. I, an old major, to take orders from such a parvenu! He has not a trace of respect for my

nobility, my position, my name. He has the ducats, and therefore we must dance as he whistles. I shall show him his true station, I shall point out to him what an honor it is for him and his house if we give our own Hildegarde to his son, who is, as far as I know, nothing more than a dismissed lieutenant. I am going to open his eyes for him."

He paced the room growling and swearing. By slow degrees the joy over Hildegarde's engagement gained the upper hand. Earlier than usual, he started for his "Stammtisch" to tell the great news and to receive congratulations. The next morning he took the train. His wife at first wished to accompany him, but he declined. "Fritz and I will talk to the old fellow, and finish the business end of it. I shall wire you how matters stand, and then you may come. I repeat, if the old man does not pay up everything clean, the engagement will come to naught."

Fritz, having met his father at a way-station, was entirely of the same opinion. He, too, had received a telegram that spoke only of the endeavor to help him, and he was as indignant over it as his father. "You observe quite correctly, Papa, there is but one thing for us to do. We threaten to take Hildegarde away with us, if he doesn't say Amen to everything. We shall have to act with great energy, and to show him we have plenty of spunk. Above all, we must make the old man feel the social abyss that separates him from us. Then he'll sing small."

But the old commercial councillor was far from singing small, as it turned out.

During the long conversation between Hildegarde and Elsa, the Baroness had considered it her duty to inform her new friend in regard to her family conditions, to admit honestly that her parents had sent her to the capital year after year to catch a rich husband. With tears, she confessed her love for George, and declared she would give him up before she would have him think for a second that she loved him for his money. At first Elsa was aghast over what she heard. Then she felt sincere pity for Hildegarde, for every word the latter spoke showed clearly her goodness and nobility. Thereupon Elsa comforted her the best she could, and gave her the assurance that George would not doubt her, that his love would only increase when he learned what sad experiences had been hers. Elsa also undertook to inform her father of what Hildegarde had told her. The old man was shocked, and at first said to his son: "George, keep away. Give up the thought of Hildegarde. Don't get dragged into the dirty stories of her family." But his resistance melted after he had seen the girl, and talked with her confidentially. He took his son aside: "George, she is an angel. We must make her happy and indemnify her by a life free from care for all the poor thing has had to endure."

They sat down together to consider what could be done for Hildegarde's relatives. She had stated the amount of the indebtedness as far as she remembered it from her last visit at home. Finally it was agreed that the elder Winkler should take care of one-half

the debts, while George should pay the other half out of his future share of inheritance. In addition, the commercial councillor would set aside a fixed amount annually as an allowance for her parents, so that they might be protected against all worry.

It was more difficult to agree as to what should be done for Fritz. George was willing to assume the obligation to make his brother-in-law a monthly allowance; but Hildegarde shook her head. "That's of no use, George, because if you in your goodness were to give him thousands upon thousands, it would only be money thrown away. The more Fritz has, the more he spends. No amount will suffice for him, he would steadily borrow of us, he would not stop gambling, and if we did not come to his assistance, he would again sign promissory notes, and before long be as heavily in debt as he is now. It is hard for me, as his sister, to say it, but I can see only one salvation for Fritz. He must take off the uniform and go across the ocean. He will never have sense till he has to work, until he is obliged to earn something, and thereby learns to appreciate the value of money."

"Hildegarde is right," said the commercial councillor, "in short, she is the most sensible girl I have ever known. If she, knowing her brother best, tells us there is no other means of salvation for him but the change of air, he must have it. Let him go to the other side, I have business relations there, and can find him a position. I shall see to it that he doesn't starve, but he will only get enough to be saved from the worst, and will be forced to earn his living."

This had been decided upon before the major and his son arrived. The iron will expressed in the whole demeanor of the commercial councillor did not give the two noblemen any chance to carry out their intentions and to show their superciliousness. They hardly knew how it came about. But they faced the old gentleman with bad consciences, when he urged his inquiries into their debts, and announced to them in what way they must be regulated.

Fritz thought he did not hear right, when he was told he must leave the army. He resisted as long as he could, but he felt his desperate position. He knew he could hold out at best only for a few weeks. It might be better to go now. If he had to go, however, there was no use in paying his debts. He might just as well keep on owing the money. He stated this to the commercial councillor, and told him he ought to save his cash and give him a few thousand marks to help him on his way.

"So you may gamble them away while on the steamer? No, no. Besides, in our 'Buergerlicher' circles we hold it as a matter of honor to discharge obligations. You, a member of the caste designated nowadays as 'first-class men,' think differently, eh? I should not have expected it."

Fritz felt embarrassed. Father and son were both glad when Elsa sent to inquire whether they were ready for breakfast, thereby bringing the conversation to a close.

The major was in the seventh heaven, and in a most jovial mood. His debts were to be paid, he

would have an extra allowance besides. He need no longer grant an allowance to his son, and therefore he could live free from care. True, it did not quite suit him that Fritz must go across the ocean; but, since the commercial councillor insisted on it, that favor might be granted him. Possibly, Fritz might make a rich marriage on the other side. In certain circles there they would be willing enough to gild his nobility. Besides, America was not so remote. He could come back at any time. He whispered this to his son when he was alone with him for a moment, and Fritz made the best of an awkward situation. Father and son enjoyed the excellent breakfast participated in by the whole company. They did not notice the rather frosty atmosphere prevailing. The following day the commercial councillor was to go home with his children and with Hildegarde.

George having handed in his resignation the day before, had invited the Yellow Butterflies to a fine dinner. At six o'clock the whole corps of officers assembled in the gayly decorated rooms of the finest hotel. Winkler, who hated from the bottom of his heart everything bordering on snobbery, had this time ordered the best and most expensive in the market. French champagne flowed freely, the choicest wines, the best and most costly dishes were selected.

As host, George took his place between the commander and the officer next in rank, and felt greatly amused on noticing how the colonel began to meditate concerning the address he was to make.

“What is he going to say?” George thought. “Does the man not perceive that this farewell dinner

is given from mere derision? There is not one man around this table but is glad of my going, yet they all come to eat at my expense and to get drunk more or less."

George welcomed his guests with a few words, and wished them an enjoyable evening. He could not say more, he could not force himself to express pleasure at being again with his dear old comrades. His words barely sufficed for courtesy. He was curious to know what the commander would reply. At last the colonel rapped for silence and rose. With him rose the whole corps of officers.

"Gentlemen," the colonel began, amid solemn silence, "we are assembled to-day for the last time with the dear comrade who leaves not only us, but the army, in order to enter the factory of his father as partner and co-worker. Although it is the usual custom that the man who leaves is the guest of the corps of officers on the last day, we appear as guests, not as hosts, because we believe thereby we can show you, dear Winkler, in the most unmistakable way, how glad we are to be with you once more. It would have been only our traditional duty to invite you, while no duty requires that we should have accepted your invitation in a body. That of all invited not one stayed away you, dear Winkler, may take as an eloquent token that of those assembled around you not one has the least against you. I cannot and will not deny that differences have existed temporarily between you and the other gentlemen. This evening proves to you that everything has been settled amicably. With sincere regret we see you leave our circle,

to which you have belonged for a short time only. Our good wishes for your future well-being we will centre in the shout: Our former regimental comrade, Lieutenant Winkler. Hurra! Hurra! Hurra!"

"Like the words with which they greeted me at first are the words with which they take leave," thought George during the commander's speech. "Not a single hearty expression, only a steady variation of the theme: What nice, dear, good fellows we are to come here to-day for your sake."

The "Hurra" was given, the music fell in, and played Uhland's popular song:

"I had once a good comrade,
His better you'll never find."

"That's the last straw," thought George, and a sensation of bitterness rose within him. "Falsehood and hypocrisy to the end."

The colonel engaged him in conversation, and George's thoughts were far away, though he was apparently listening with attention to the description of a war episode. He saw around him his comrades, who were partly drunk by this time, mostly of mere pleasure at being rid of him, and who would soon be drunk to the last degree. Suddenly he was seized, he did not know why, by a sensation of joy that he was no longer a member of a class which does not look seriously enough upon life and work, a class that is not conscious of its ideal task: To be the educators of young Germany.

THE END.